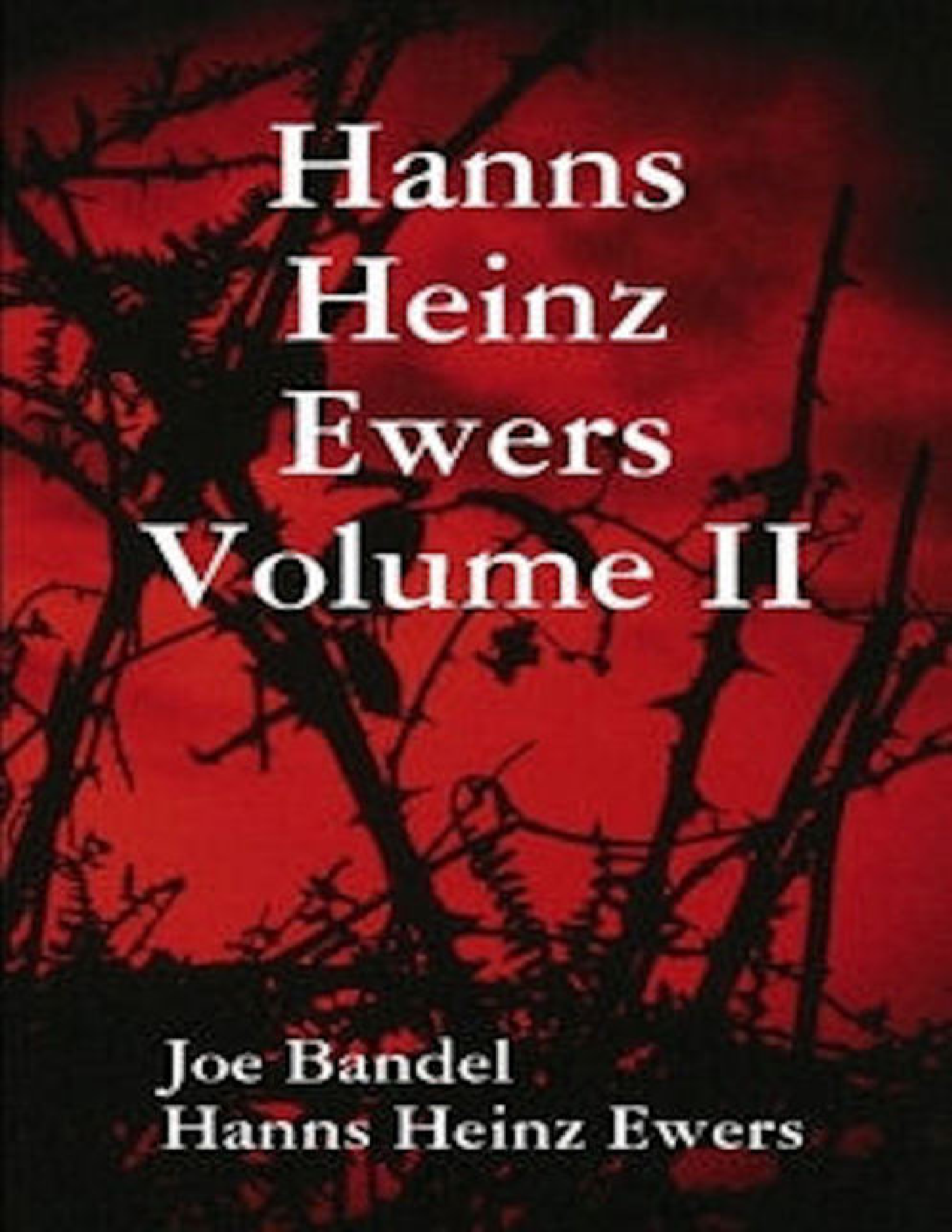
Hanns
Heinz
Ewers
Volume II
Joe Bandel
Hanns Heinz Ewers

Hanns Heinz Ewers Volume II

By
Hanns Heinz Ewers
Translation by Joe E.Bandel

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Kindle Edition
Published by
Bandel Books

This book is dedicated to my children and step-children., Lyssa, Crystal, Whitney, Dylan, Sarah and Jason. Dreams can come true. Even if it is four pages at a time. Don't ever give up!

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Das Weisse Mädchen 1907

Von den elftausend Jungfrauen and den vier Heiligen Dreikönigen 1926

Die Wasserleiche 1907

Karneval in Cadiz 1926

Von elf Chinesen und ihrer aufgefressen Braut 1926

Aus dem Tagebuch eines Orangenbaumes 1907

Von Gänsen und Geistern, Blutegeln un Katzenorgeln 1943

Das Feenland 1907

Alraune und ihr Chauffeur 1917

Der letzte Wille der Stanislawa d'Asp 1908

Mamaloi 1907 (Translated by Erich Posselt and Sinclair Dombrow)

Der schlimmste Verrat 1922

Das verlorene Āffchen 1907

Lithographs by Edgar Parin d'Aulaire
Photo of Hanns Heinz Ewers owned by Dr. Wilfried Kugel

HANNS HEINZ EWERS VOLUME II

HANNS HEINZ EWERS

THE WHITE MAIDEN

ELEVEN THOUSAND VIRGINS AND THE FOUR HOLY THREE KINGS

THE WATER CORPSE

CARNIVAL IN CADIZ

HOW ELEVEN CHINESE DEVOURED THEIR BRIDE

FROM THE JOURNAL OF AN ORANGE TREE

OF GEESE, SPIRITS, LEECHES AND THE CAT ORGAN

FAIRYLAND

ALRAUNE AND HER CHAUFFEUR

THE LAST WILL OF STANISLAWA D'ASP

MAMALOI

THE WORST BETRAYAL

THE LOST MONKEY

Hanns Heinz Ewers

You hold in your hands the second volume of short stories by Dr. Hanns Heinz Ewers. Imagine if you will, a short, sensitive, slender and young looking man that was constantly looking for things to write about in his diary. He kept diaries all through his life beginning as a teenager. He also kept journals and whenever he saw or experienced something emotionally powerful he wrote it down to be used later for possible inclusion in some of his stories.

The difference with Dr. Hanns Heinz Ewers was that he actively sought out strong emotional experiences and was not afraid of the darker side of life. Most of his stories are not about the supernatural, but about psychological horrors, things from real life that were shunned and not spoken about. They are also about things that he had personal experience with.

His writing was strongly auto-biographical and you can learn much about the man by reading between the lines. In this collection of short stories we also learn a lot about the times in which he lived.

In **The White Maiden** we learn about rich personalities that put on elaborate stage productions for select audiences. This was also the pattern of Freemasonry and other secret societies, using dramatic plays or enactments to initiate and to teach their members.

In **Eleven Thousand Virgins and the Four Holy Three Kings** we learn a lot about Rosicrucianism and the sacred history of the period. We are asked to ponder what is the truth of a religion, what is in the heart or in the official history. Like Finchen, so many of us do not “feel” our religion or its truths.

The Water Corpse gives insight into Dr. Hanns Heinz Ewers himself as he tried to move away from writing horror and introducing his series of poems on the **Soul of Flowers**. He loved beauty, but his audience wanted horror.

Carnival in Cadiz is an insightful little story about what happens when we are confronted by something truly supernatural. There is no doubt in my mind at all that he actively sought out the supernatural and esoteric experiences. Yet he attempted explain them in modern psychological terms.

How Eleven Chinese Devoured Their Bride shows just how far off the beaten track Dr. Ewers was willing to go for his stories. It also shows how narrow our own culture is and how repressed we are. I can not even imagine such a story being published today.

From the Journal of an Orange Tree gives us a glimpse into true insanity, or is it really insanity? In the end we might even question our own reality. It is this type of outside-the-box thinking that makes Dr. Ewers such a powerful and innovative writer. He stands out even in today's world.

Of Geese, Spirits, Leechs and the Cat Organ is special to me. It is an excerpt from chapter two of **Fundvogel** and someday I hope to complete the entire novel. **Fundvogel** is about a woman that gets a sex change operation and was written in 1926! In this short story we are introduced to Dr. Ewers' other protagonist, Dr. Jan Oleislagers. This remarkable Fleming shows up in several other stories including: **The Last Will of Stanislaw d'Asp** and **The Worst Betrayal**, two of his finest short stories. Many don't know about Dr. Jan Oleislagers. He is quite a remarkable character to say the least!

Fairyland is a classic short story that is as shocking today as when it was first written. This is especially true as seen through the eyes of a small child. What kind of person could write such a story? Hanns Heinz Ewers!

Alraune and her Chauffuer is an excerpt from **Alraune** that was included as a short story in **Mein Begräbnis** (1917) andis offered for those that may not have yet had a chance to read my new translation of **Alraune**. This short story really bothered me as I was translating it. The emotional effects were so powerful.

Mamaloi is the only story in this book that I didn 't translate myself. It is a story about voodoo in Haiti during the year 1906. Hanns Heinz Ewers is reputed to have participated in such activities during his stay in Haiti. I will learn more of this when reading **Mit meinen Augen. Fahrten durch die lateinische Welt**. (1909) In this book he chronicles his travels through the latin speaking countries. There is an entry about voodoo and also a photo of a child that is to be used as a human sacrifice.

Lastly, **The Lost Monkey** is the second story I ever translated. (**Edgar Allen Poe** was the first) This humoruous little story is about word play and does not translate well at all. I've tried to make some notes to make it more enjoyable. It also has a double ending as it was modified in later years.

All of these short stories show a completely different side to Dr. Hanns Heinz Ewers than what has been previously made public. Some of these stories show a sensitive side and a humorous side as well as the side commonly associated with horror and cruelty. In the truest sense these stories will share much more about the man than I can ever hope to say in a few pages. The more you read, the more you will grow to understand him. (perhaps!)

Joe E. Bandel
January 28,2014

The White Maiden

Naples, May 1907

Donald Mac Lean was waiting at the coffeehouse. As Lothar entered he called out to him:

“Finally! I believed you weren’t coming.”

Lothar sat down and poked at the lemonade the girl brought him.

“What’s up?” he asked.

Mac Lean bent forward a little.

“It will be interesting for you,” he said. “You’ve studied the transformations of Aphrodite? —Well then, perhaps you will see a new manifestation of the foam born one.”

Lothar yawned, “Oh!—Really?”

“Really,” said Mac Lean.

“Excuse me a minute,” Lothar continued. “Venus is the true daughter of Proteus, but I believe I know all of her variations. I spent over a year in Bombay with Klaus Petersen—”

“So?” said the Scotsman.

“So? —You know Klaus Petersen don’t you? Herr Klaus Petersen of Hamburg has a talent, is perhaps a genius! —The Marshal Gilles de Rais was a charlatan—compared to him!”

Donald Mac Lean shrugged his shoulders, “He is not the only one with talent!”

“Certainly not! But just wait. As you know Oscar Wilde was my good friend and I have known Inez Secket through long years. Each of these could produce a complete transformation that was sensational!”

“Yet not all of them,” the painter threw in.

“Not all?” Lothar drummed on the table. “But the best of them!—In short, I know Venus as she turns into Eros. I know her as she puts on furs and swings the scourge. I know Venus as the bloodthirsty Sphinx who sinks her claws into the tender flesh of children. I know the Venus that dances lewdly in rotting carrion, and I know the black love goddess for whom the Priest sprays his disgusting sacrifice over the virgin’s white body at Satan’s black Mass.

Laurette Dumont took me along to her animal park. I know what few know, how rare and stimulating the secret appeal of bestiality is! Still more, in Geneva I have discovered Lady Kathlin Mac-Murdoch’s secret, which no other living person knows! I know the depraved Venus—or should I say the purest—the marriage of humans to flowers! —Do you still believe the goddess of love can choose a guise that will be new to me?”

Mac Lean slowly slurped at his strega.

“I promise you nothing,” he said. “I only know that Duke Ettore Aldobrandino has been back in Naples again for three days. I met him yesterday at the Toledo.”

“I would be happy to make his acquaintance,” replied Lothar. “I’ve often heard of him. He is one of the few people that understands how to make art out of life—and—has the means to do it.”

“I believe I don’t have to explain him to you,” continued the Scottish painter. “You shall soon see for yourself. The Duke is giving a party the day after tomorrow and I would like to introduce you!”

“Thank you,” said Lothar.

The Scott laughed.

“Aldobrandini was very good humored when I met with him. It happens that the time to which he invited me is unusual—five o’clock in the afternoon—I’m entirely certain that something is up. I believe the Duke has

a very special surprise for his friends and if that is the case you can be certain we will experience something unheard of. The Duke never travels on well trod paths."

"Let's hope you are right," sighed Lothar. "May I have the satisfaction of picking you up the day after tomorrow?"

"Thank you very much," responded the painter.

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"Largo San Domenico!" cried Mac Lean to the coachman. "Palazzo Corigliano!"

They both climbed up the broad baroque steps. An English servant led them into the salon. They found seven or eight gentlemen, all in tails and a priest in a violet cassock, on the lower level. Mac Lean introduced his friend to the Duke who shook Lothar's hand.

"I thank you for coming," he said with a charming smile. "I hope you will not be disappointed."

He excused himself and turned with a loud voice to address all those present.

"Gentlemen!" he said. "I beg your pardon to have inconvenienced you at such an untimely hour—but I am placed in a tight spot. The little doe that I have the honor of presenting to you today is unfortunately from an extraordinarily proper and upstanding family. It is only with great difficulty that she can come here and she must under all circumstances be back home by half past seven this evening so that her Mama, Papa and the English

governess won't notice. That, gentlemen, is one of the things a Cavalier must take into consideration! And now I beg you to excuse me for a few minutes. I still have a few preparations to make. Meanwhile if you would be so good as to partake of some refreshments!"

The Duke waved to his servants, bowed a couple more times and then went out. A gentleman with a giant Victor Emanuel mustache came up to Lothar. It was di Nardis, the political editor of the *Pungolo*, who wrote under the pseudonym of "Fuoco".

"I bet we will be seeing an Arabian parody," he laughed. "The Duke has just returned from Baghdad."

The priest shook his head.

"No, Don Goffrelo," he said. "We will be enjoying a little piece from the Roman Renaissance. The Duke studied Valdomoni's secret history, 'The Borgia', for a year. The director of the Reich's archives in Severino e Sosio only let him read them after long begging."

"Well we shall certainly see," said Mac Lean. "Meanwhile would you give me tomorrows racing tips that you promised me?"

The editor pulled out his notebook and became absorbed with the priest and the Scottish painter in turf talk. Lothar slowly ate orange sherbet from a crystal plate. He studied the beautiful golden spoon that showed the crest of the Aldobrandini's, a scalloped crossbar between six stars. After half an hour the servant pushed the curtains back.

"The Duke invites you!" he cried.

He led the gentlemen through two small rooms, then opened a double door, let everyone enter and closed it quickly behind them. They found themselves in a large, very long room that was now very dimly lit. The floor was covered in wine red carpet. The windows and doors were thoroughly covered with heavy curtains of the same color and the ceiling was as well.

The walls, which were completely empty, were covered in the same wine red fabric and the few chairs and divan were upholstered with it too. The back of the room was completely dark and only with effort could you make out an instrument covered with a heavy red cloth.

"I beg the gentlemen to take their places," cried the Duke.

He sat down and the others followed his example. The servant stepped quickly from one golden wall lamp to another putting out the few candles. As the room became entirely dark they heard a soft music coming from the harpsichord A series of soothing sounds flowed lightly through the hall.

"Palestrina," murmured the priest softly. "You see that you were wrong with your Arabian guess, Don Goffredo."

"Well," answered the editor just as quietly, "did you do any better with your thought of Cesare Borgia?"

They could tell the instrument was an ancient spinet. The simple tones awoke a strange sensation in Lothar. He thought back, but couldn't recognize the feeling, what it really was. In any case it was something that he hadn't felt for a long, long time. Di Nardis leaned over to him, so close that the long mustache tickled his cheek.

"I feel it!" he whispered into his ear. "I never knew that I could still be so naïve!"

Lothar felt the same way. After awhile the silent servant lit two candles. A faint, almost sinister glimmer fell through the hall. The music went on—

"And yet," whispered Lothar to his neighbor, "and yet there is a strange menace to the sound. I would like to say it's an innocent menace."

The silent servant lit a couple more candles. Lothar stared at the red color that filled the room like a bloody haze—

The blood color almost choked him. The sounds were like a dim white light rising and his soul clung to them, but the red pressed itself back and

dominated, gaining the upper hand. The silent servant lit still more candles.

"I can't bear much more," Lothar heard the editor murmur between his teeth.

Now the hall was half lit up.

The red pressed in and covered everything. The white light of the innocent music became fainter—fainter—

Then a figure stepped past the spinet and up to the front. It was a young maiden wrapped in a large white cloth. She stepped slowly into the middle of the hall, a bright, shining white cloud in the red fire. Then the maiden stopped and stood still. She spread her arms apart so that the cloth surrounding her fell down. The cloth kissed her feet like silent swans, but the white of the maiden's body glowed even more.

Lothar leaned back and unconsciously raised a hand to his eyes.

"She's almost blinding," he breathed.

She was a young, scarcely developed girl of a delightful, budding immaturity, a sovereign innocent in need of no defense and yet with a certain promise of awakening desire and extreme fulfillment. Her blue-black hair was parted in the middle, waved over her temples and ears and around the back where it was pinned into a heavy knot. Her large black eyes looked straight out at the gentlemen, indifferent, without seeing anyone. Her lips seemed to smile, a strange unconscious smile of menacing innocence and her radiant white flesh glowed so brightly that all the surrounding red appeared to recede. She rang out of the music like jubilation—

Now for the first time Lothar noticed that the girl carried a snow-white dove on her hand. She bowed her head down a little and raised her hand, stroking the white dove on its little head. The dove kissed the white maiden that stroked it, that gently scratched its little head and lightly pressed the

little animal against her breasts. The white dove raised its wings a little and snuggled tightly, tightly, against the glowing flesh.

“Blessed dove!” whispered the priest.

Then with a quick, sudden movement the white maiden raised the dove with both hands high into the air straight over her head. She threw her head back and with a strong pull tore the white dove apart. Then, without a drop disturbing her face, the red blood flowed down in long streams over her shoulders and breasts, over the radiant body of the white maiden.

All around the red pulled itself back together. It was as if the white maiden sank, trembling, seeking help, cowering down into a mighty bath of blood. From all sides the voluptuous fire crept up to it. The floor opened itself like an avenging fire, a terrible red that devoured the white maiden—

The next second the trapdoor closed again. The silent servant tore the curtain back and quickly led the gentlemen into the adjoining room. No one seemed to feel like speaking. They quietly took their coats and went downstairs.

The Duke was gone.

* *

*

“Gentlemen!” said the editor of the *Pungolo* to Lothar and the Scottish painter when they reached the street. “Would you like to eat dinner at Bertolini’s Terrasse?”

The three went there. They quietly drank their champagne, quietly stared out at the cruel beauty of Naples that the last rays of the evening sun immersed in a glowing fire.

The editor pulled out a notebook and wrote down a few numbers.

Sixteen = blood, four = dove, twenty one = virgin

A beautiful trio,” he said. “I will play them this week in the lottery!”

Eleven Thousand Virgins and the Four Holy Three Kings

We were traveling across to Cologne. Why would we want to do that? Simply because if a man has a feminine friend in Dusseldorf and wants to go sight seeing he travels to Cologne and the man from Cologne likewise travels to Dusseldorf.

It only takes forty minutes and everything is entirely different. You can in this same amount of time also travel to Krefeld or Essen, to Duisburg or Elbefeld or to a dozen different nearby cities. That doesn't matter.

What matters is that you are going to someplace different. I was traveling to Cologne with style this time. Her name was Finchen. I could see three other things that were stylish as well.

First, Finchen did not travel alone. I had to take her plump friend Bertha along.

Second, Bertha was in second class and not here.

Third, the stylish Finchen explained that she only traveled to proper, educational places. First she must see the Cathedral, then the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, then to St. Gereonen, then—

Now to see all of this would take all week, not just four hours. But Finchen wanted to be home by dark. You can't see much more if you

needed to travel back from Cologne.

On the sixth of January we traveled across and were already in the Cathedral by eight-o-clock. A friend of mine was already there waiting. He was supposed to escort the plump Bertha. His name was Schmitz—What else would a man be named in Cologne? —Peter Schmitz.

It was well for him that he had a passion for large women. He radiated when he had something wobbly to cuddle and squeeze.

Now the sixth of January—it is a shame that I must say this, in old Christian times all the people knew but now today even the ones that live on the Rhein scarcely do —the sixth of January is also Three Kings Day.

The clever Finchen noticed and wondered what was going on. So many people in the Cathedral were celebrating and over the High Altar electric light bulbs were arranged in glowing letters that spelled out: C.M.B.

“What do those letters mean?” She remarked lightly.

By the way, she was not from the Rhein but from distant California where the people are also highly devoted, but more to oranges and movies than to old buildings, bones and Saints.

So I said that it was apparently a lighted advertisement for cigarettes.

“The ‘B’ means ‘Batschar’ and the ‘M’ stands for ‘Muratti’ or perhaps for ‘Manoli’ or perhaps for both companies. They all put up such offensive advertisements. The ‘C’ is apparently a misprint. They must have forgotten the small crossways line that would make it a ‘G’ and that would be for ‘Garbaty’.”

My friend Schmitz grinned, nodded and said, “It could mean that!”

The honest Bertha appeared enlightened by my explanation. But the stylish Finchen didn’t believe a word of it. She declared furthermore that no one would permit an advertisement for cigarettes in a church. Then she ran over to the red jacketed Cathedral attendant.

He confirmed that she was entirely correct and the ArchBishop would never permit such a thing. Furthermore, it was a sacred advertisement for the Holy Three Kings:

The ‘B’ didn’t mean ‘Batschar’ at all, it meant ‘Balthasar’; the ‘M’ meant ‘Manoli’ or ‘Melchior’ instead of ‘Muratti’; and ‘C’ in no way meant ‘Garbaty’ but ‘Kaspar’!

“Well,” I excused myself. “I was a little correct about the ‘C’ being a misprint. If there had been a true ‘K’ for the Holy King Kaspar I would have recognized it easily!”

But Finchen said it was a stupid excuse, that I was an uneducated man and should keep my mouth shut. So we took the red jacketed fellow along. He traveled around with us and talked like a waterfall. Finchen thought it was all very instructive, especially about the sacred bones. She showed an extraordinary comprehension but in the middle of the explanation said that she had enough and would look more next time.

Peter Schmitz was staying back with Bertha. I thought I saw him make a tender pass at her near a side altar. We met up with them both at a portal further along. My friend thought Bertha was a real handful, a good Catholic girl and an outlander. Even more endearing, she was in the need of a good education.

Next we went to St. Gereonen where, thank God, there was no Sexton or attendant to encounter. We clattered around in the crypt. Schmitz declared that the sacred bones of the eleven thousand virgins must be down there somewhere but we didn’t find as much as a small collar bone.

That’s when Finchen again insulted me for having such a useless friend that knew absolutely nothing! She discovered an old solitary Mother praying on a bench way in back. She waited until there was a small pause in the prayer and asked where we could find the sacred remains of the virgins.

The pious Mother was very angry and said they couldn't be seen here. They were in St. Ursula's and by the way, today was Three Kings Day and the eleven thousand virgins could only be viewed on Ursula Day. Then only at nighttime when they go outside and are carried around St. Ursula's church.

But this church belonged to St. Gereonen who was known as the general of the Theban Legion—Of whom all were martyrs. There were many more than eleven thousand and by their sacrifice were probably more successful than Ursula with her virgins—She could only recommend we would be better off visiting St. Gereonen and his Legion. Finchen thanked her for the good information.

Then to the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum. There Schmitz took his leave saying he had an important business appointment but could meet us at the "Eternal Lamp" in two hours. The old swindler—Business in Cologne on Three Kings Day! —It was my thought that he was trying to pass as a true Cologner and had never set foot in the museum. He didn't want to be put on the spot and asked any more questions or get scolded again.

Finchen dismissed him very ungratefully. If he wanted to get back in favor with her again he needed to read a few books. He should study up on the Sacred Virgins and the Holy Kings and tell her about them at the afternoon meal. Naturally Schmitz promised to do so.

My truth radiates from the light of the old Rheinish Masters—When instructing people from California it is easy—I rummaged through all my knowledge, every possible long forgotten and fallen bit of information. I don't know if everything was right, if I had it all right, but in any case I was making an excellent impression on Finchen.

That is until I started talking about the Master of the Holy Family and St. Bartholomew's Altar. With hawk eyes I referred to Stephen Lochner

which contained difficult words in the Liesdorfer School of Speech. A museum attendant couldn't have done it more beautifully, only more correctly.

All I really knew was that the fellow with the big hole in his leg was St. Rochas and the Lady with the tongs was St. Apollonia who suffered from a toothache. It was so well done that Finchen's regard for my knowledge climbed to an extraordinary degree.

I rushed from room to room as the Rosicrucian Master and the portly Bertha whose lover waited at the "Eternal Lamp" valiantly rushed along with.

But it didn't matter, the eager to learn maiden from California didn't have the capacity for any more, nor the inclination to come along.

She stayed right there. I thought to myself that there must be an atavistic impulse in her. She came out of Los Angeles and the painting was called simply "La Ciudad de la Nuestra Seňora de Los Angeles".

No wonder that she had a secret love for all the Madonnas. She stood for a half-hour in front of "Madonna with Cetch" and simply wouldn't leave "Madonna of the Rose Arbor".

The dear God must have understood and sent splendid snowy weather. It became so gloomy in the museum that you couldn't recognize any more paintings.

It didn't help—Finchen had to be separated from all her beloved Saints. Three hours passed before we were finally in the "Eternal Lamp".

There sat Peter Schmitz. He had used the time to brew a mighty midwife's bowl of tea. Finchen asked if there was any alcohol in it. My friend proclaimed that it was a most innocent drink, only tea and citrus and such gentle things—The small amount of wine and Arrack—that were mixed in were completely harmless.

So, she drank and seemed to acquire a taste for it. It can't be denied that her mood quickly lifted and with the twist of a hand Schmitz was back in her good graces. She asked him if he had been able to do any studying and he answered in the affirmative. But he thought they should eat first; then he would gladly share his wisdom. He sat next to Miss Bertha on the sofa and honestly devoted himself to looking after her.

In the "Eternal Lamp" you eat very well and my friend Schmitz got on with it shoving delicacies together with exceptional enthusiasm—This and the hot Devil's bowl after six hours of Religious Art—In short, it was a huge success for him.

Nevertheless the knowledge hungry creature from the city of Angels wanted more. She kept interrupting his drinking and eating and cuddling with her thirst for more. At last he stopped.

"Now I know the entire story," he began. "We Cologners are famous for our saints. We have very many. But perhaps the most famous are the eleven thousand virgins and the four Holy Kings."

"Four," cried Finchen. "There were only three!"

"There were four," insisted Schmitz. "Our song of the three Kings begins:

—The four kings with their star, Kaspar, Melcher, Baltes, Bern—

The friendly Bertha came to his aid. She was very happy and excited that she could add to the discussion.

"Yes, that is correct," she cried. "It says that in the "Boys Horn of Wonder —and the four kings were quite rotten company. They ate and drank and wouldn't willingly pay for anything! —"

"Three, Three!" Finchen demanded. "It is called 'Three Kings Day' and the three Holy Kings!"

But my friend remained unyielding.

“You still don’t understand.” He explained, “Because you have heard the hymns of the Church of England and they don’t have the proper Catholic feel. But perhaps your Lutheran soul might permit clarification. The Holy Trinity is only one Being! Why can’t the four be three?”

“But over the High Altar there were only three glowing letters,” groaned Finchen. “a ‘C’, a ‘M’, and a ‘B’!”

“That doesn’t matter,” declared Schmitz. The glowing bowl had given him courage.

“Very well, the ‘M’ can mean both ‘Manoli’ and the ‘Muratti’ of the cigarette advertisement. The ‘B’ can be an advertisement for the three Kings or ‘Balthazar’ or even ‘Bernard’! Dear Maiden, you will not come near these things with external reason but must instead experience them much more deeply and feel them!

As long as you only aesthetically enjoy the Madonna paintings and the bones of the saints, as long as you don’t feel them with your religion, your soul will dangle hopelessly— like a limp dick! —

“What is that,” demanded Finchen. “What do you mean: a limp dick?”

But my friend Peter was way over his head.

“I can’t be detained with that right now,” he cried. “You must ask another man from Cologne about it sometime. It is more important to comprehend the mysticism of the sacred numbers. Do you notice this formula is the central theory for Friedrich Schlegel in his ‘Herkeles Musagetes’.

It goes:

‘You still don’t know the sprightly three and the cultured four?

Truly—God wishes it so—You will never find the One!’

Finch looked at him quite dumbfounded. But Peter took a mighty gulp and continued.

“Now I must first relate to you the story of our eleven thousand sacred virgins. These beloved maidens were all from England. They were the first English encampments that we had in Cologne. It didn’t last long and all eleven thousand were killed almost as soon as they arrived. That is why their bones are so sacred.

It is true that we Cologners never touched a curly hair. Our fear and concern was of the Huns that would suddenly visit. We believed the English would send another eleven thousand young men to add to their eleven thousand virgins. The next time when the Huns were up to their old game the young men would be here to help fight.

We would hold the bones of the virgins in highest respect. It was all very nice and very strongly believed. Unfortunately it was only a pious wish!

The leader of the eleven thousand virgins was a king’s daughter named Ursula. She was just as devout as she was chaste and resolved with her friends Kordula and Pinnosa and another ten thousand nine hundred and ninety seven other maidens to make a pilgrimage to Rome. They set off on ships sailing over the sea from England and up the Rhein.

They got out in Bosel, walked over the Alps back into Italy and made their formal visit to the Holy Father in Rome. Then the eleven thousand virgins all came back the same way again but this time ended up in Cologne.

It was a massacre. St. Kordula tried to save herself by hiding under the deck. But her sorrow was so great on the next day that her enthusiasm to be a martyr grew and she clambered around. Angry Huns subsequently killed her as well.

“So, my dear Lady,” Schmitz continued. “That is how the story goes. You can’t blame me anymore for not informing you about the sacred history of my father city.

Still, there is something I must add. I believe there is something not quite right or even better, I believe only half of it. I am inclined to believe the eleven thousand English Ladies came here. We can see daily what great partiality the English have for our dear city, Cologne. I can also believe in the chastity and virginity of the King’s daughter. We know that applied virtue can bring to pass a triumph over vice.

But what every true Cologner must clarify about the legendary story is how the Huns slaughtered all eleven thousand. The Ladies from England were not completely killed off but took refuge in the old left wing of the Cathedral, the part built by Master Heinrich. Furthermore, they are still alive today! They are all taking part in the most important and active industry of our city.”

“They are still alive?” gasped Finchen. She peered into her glass. “What do they do?”

“Hear me out,” Schmitz cried. “We have an old Colgnish tune. It is anonymously written and little known but we still hear it. He bellowed out:

‘In Cologne on the Rhein
Where the three Kings hail
They want virgins to go there
Eleven thousand virgins
It is shipped in large casks
Eau de Cologne we call it!’

“Shame on you!” cried the stylish Finchen. “How can you attempt—”

But Schmitz interrupted her. “Just wait Miss, You will be glad to see that it is really true. The secret manufacture of Cologne’s waters is carefully guarded. But how can it be that after several hundred years the secret has still not leaked out?

All over the world people would have been making “Eau de Cologne” for a long time now. If they knew how! But they can’t. Where could they find eleven thousand sacred virgins? And how about this. There are only a few companies that have brotherly stock in this singular virgin product. Business is good and the virgins no longer need to work. They only need to drink: old style Colgnish beer, Mosel wine and especially midwife tea bowls.

They do it gladly for the English. Besides, the more you drink, the more you can—make! The more you make, the more you can earn. It is a type of piece work.”

“That is unheard of!” cried Finchen angrily. “It is a screaming cruelty to heaven. The—”

“No, no,” Peter Schmitz attempted to quiet her. “It is and it isn’t. The Ladies do it gladly, and dear Miss Finchen, by the thirst you have and by the splendid gulping you can do, you might have a chance at becoming one of the eleven thousand sacred virgins. The Cologne-Water-Business is so magnificent that it can scarcely fill the orders they have.

The company mill down the street, for example, employs several thousand sacred virgins. Enough to number 4711. Therefore this sacred number is marked on all their products and glitters on all their “Eau de Cologne” bottles.

House Hymann across from Gülich place—With a hard ‘G’ please—Has only six hundred Cologne Water making virgins but they have all been specially selected for their distinguished product and its glorious aroma. It

is said that for such a purpose they must drink turpentine before going to bed.

Johann Maria Farina employs over two thousand sacred water makers across from Jülich place —with a soft ‘J’ please and a German ‘ü’ like in gegenüber —

Then there is Maria Clementine Martin across from the Cathedral. The ‘K’ appears in their house name ‘Kloister Frau’ named after the virgin Kordula who trained them personally in the development of ‘Eau de Cologne Double’.

Some seven hundred—”

“It is a disgrace, a monkey show!” Finchen cried in highest rage.

Her face was glowing hot as the midwife’s bowl and almost as red as a turkey cock.

“It is an obscenity that preys specifically upon undeserving foreign maidens! I will send a cable back to the American press and they will make an end to this business. We will boycott your ‘Eau de Cologne’. No upstanding American would use it anymore if they knew how it was made!”

“Oh God,” lamented Schmitz, “Don’t do that!”

“I will do much more than that!” stormed Finchen. “I will form an alliance with the English Ladies. I will not rest until all eleven thousand go on strike!”

She called for the InnKeeper to bring her fur coat and hat. She picked up her purse and gloves and sailed out.

I don’t travel over to Cologne any more with education hungry foreign women. Schmitz had it right. They fall apart when they experience the power of a real religion.

The Water Corpse

Once there was a young man that looked at the world with somewhat different eyes than those that lived around him. He dreamed at noon and around midnight thoughts would flutter out that those sitting around him found very foolish. They called him a butter-yellow fool. But he believed he was a poet.

When they laughed at his verses he laughed too and they didn't notice how much it hurt him. It hurt him so much that he went outside and walked to the Rhine whose muddy floodwaters were slapping against the shack on the old toll bridge. It was only a coincidence that he didn't jump into the waters that time. It was only because he met a friend that said, "Come along with to the tavern!"

He sat there in the tavern and drank, first with his friend, Joseph Shöfer and after that with Maximi Grünhäuser and Forster Kirchenstück. That's when a few lines came to him and he wrote them down on the wine list with his pencil. Later when his colleagues, the assistant judge, public prosecutor and two county court judges, came in he read the lines to them.

"…In a carp pond there once swam a pale blue and slimy soft water corpse."

He told how the carps amused themselves over the corpse; each conjecturing, how one would say something good and the other say

something bad about it.

Then he continued:

“However, an old centenarian boy rejoiced at the good godsend. He didn’t speak a word. He ate and ate, forgetting the rest of the world and thinking, “There has never been such a beautiful, slimy, soft and pale blue water corpse in this pond.”

You should have seen his colleagues then, the assistant judge, public prosecutor and the two county court judges!

“Man!” said the public prosecutor. “Don’t take it wrong because I’m always kidding you! You are a genius! You will become famous!”

“Magnificent!” cried the blonde county court judge. “Magnificent! That comes from legal training! Goethe was cut out of such wood!”

“Habemus Poetam!” exulted the round as a barrel attorney.

They all told him that he was a poet, a genuine poet, a one of a kind poet, “fit” for these times and “modern”.

The young man laughed and gave them a shove because he thought they were playing a joke on him. But when he saw they were really serious he got up and left the tavern. In an instant he was sober again, so sober that he nearly went back to the Rhine.

So that’s how it was. When he felt like a poet they considered him a fool. Now when he was fooling around they declared him a poet.

Naturally the public prosecutor was right. The young man became famous. He recited his verses everywhere, on large and small stages, from podiums in lecture halls. He would make his mouth round like a fishe’s mouth, smack his lips like a carp and begin:

“In a carp pond there once swam a pale blue and slimy soft water corpse.”

Of course you know that his colleagues, the assistant judge, public prosecutor and the two county court judges had not been exaggerating. You know all that, how people gave him praise and recognition, cheered and applauded him in every German city. You know how actors, speakers and toastmasters every where took up his poetry and how his fame and glory spread even farther. You know how musicians set his verse to music, sang it and strove to enhance the smacking sound of the carp to make it even more natural sounding. You know all of that…

The young man thought, "That's all well and good. Let them cheer and applaud. Let them proclaim my wine inspired verse as great poetry. Let them! It will make me famous, known every where and then I can perform what I really want to."

That's what the young man thought and so he revealed the story of the pale blue and slimy soft water corpse to many thousands of delighted ears and told no one how disgusting it all was to him. First he would bite his lip, make a charming face and then pucker up into a carp face.

The young man forgot that the highest virtue of a German, one that he demanded of poets as well, was to be true, to always sing in the same tune as the first song and never change it on any account. If they sang anything else it would ring false, be objectionable and not be true and the loyal German would despise it.

But now this young man was dreaming of lilies, orchids, yellow mallow and tall chestnut blossoms. The audiences laughed out loud and turned their backs on him, but not every where. The upper class was so cultured and refined from early childhood on that they didn't laugh as he performed his new routine one evening at the theater on Ringstrasse. He spoke of the soul of flowers with a quiet voice, after the court opera singer

and the longhaired musicians. They didn't laugh; they even applauded and found it very cute. That's how cultured and refined they were.

But the young man still felt that the ladies and gentlemen were bored and was not at all surprised when one called out, "The Water Corpse!"

He wouldn't do it until the lady of the house stepped up to him, "Yes please, Herr Doctor, The Water Corpse."

He sighed, bit his lip, made the puckered up carp face and performed the horrible story for the three thousandth two hundred and twenty eighth time. He almost choked on it —

But the ladies and gentlemen applauded and cheered him on. Then he saw an old lady spring up from her chair, give a hoarse, short scream and sink back down again. The gentlemen brought cologne water and washed the unconscious woman's forehead and temples. The young man knelt at her feet and kissed her hand. He felt that he loved this woman like he did his own mother.

When she opened her eyes her first glance was of him. She pulled her hand away as if from an unclean animal and screamed, "Get him away!"

At that he sprang up and ran away into a back corner of the hall. He sat down and put his head in his hands. He sat there while they escorted the old lady down the stairs to her carriage. He knew everything, knew it all even before they said a word to him. It was the fulfillment of an expectation, something he always knew would happen one day.

When they came up to him with their, "Terrible! Most frightful!"; with their, "Tragedy of life!" and "Cruel coincidence!"

He was not at all surprised.

"I already know," he said. "The old lady lost her only son a few years ago. He drowned in the lake and it was months before they found the grisly,

unrecognizable corpse. She, the mother, herself, had to identify the corpse didn't she?"

They nodded.

At that the young man straightened up and almost screamed, "And in order to amuse you monkeys I have made a fool of myself and caused this unlucky mother such pain! So laugh! Laugh!"

He made the puckered up carp face:

"In a carp pond once swam a pale blue and slimy soft water corpse."

But this time they didn't laugh. They were much too cultured and refined for that.

Carnival in Cadiz

There were some that said there was a machine inside or there were little wheels that rolled under the tree; others thought it might have come from the English cruiser, perhaps a cadet or lieutenant from the ship had learned the trick from an Indian magician. It was almost certain that someone had been inside the tree trunk — (But no! Said those that had smashed it to pieces. There had been nothing inside!) —The only thing certain was that one Rose Monday afternoon the walking tree trunk was there in the market place of the white city of Cadiz and as a consequence of its unexplainable presence the heads of all the citizens and all the strangers there were as confused as the syntax of these beautiful sentences.

Before three o'clock in the afternoon the marketplace and the adjoining streets were all full of people. Everyone was out on the streets on this clear and sunny day, strolling up and down, laughing as they passed by each other. The women wore veils or lacy shawls adorned with red carnations and white tuberoses, which were called nards and were not considered funeral flowers there at all. They wore their only possessions on their bodies; at home there might have been only a wobbly table and some rickety chairs in a room. Here on the streets they strolled around in lace and patent leather shoes wearing diamonds and colored stones on their fingers, ears, in their hair and on their arms.

Every brothel had its doors closed on this day — the city's prostitutes, powdered and painted, ran on the streets. The sailors from the ships in the harbor, English, German and Scandinavian, sat at tables in front of pubs, drinking wine from Jerez and Malaga and crying out to the prostitutes. Yet the Moors from Tangier and Ceuta were sober Moroccan seamen dressed in white burnooses and turbans. They snuck quietly and unnoticed through the

crowd, only their eyes burned with the greedy passions of pirates from the reef. The ladies, in their veils and lace shawls, adorned with red carnations and white nards, sat in carriages that slowly circled around.

There were no boos or yells anywhere, only happy shouts and laughter. Many of the people were dressed in masks and adventurous costumes, wildly sewn together out of colorful rags. There were a mixture of Chinese, Indians, gauchos, and Turks. There were fake swords, long noses, high stilts and pumpkin heads; curious misunderstood representations of Captain Fracassa, Pantalone and the Harlequin. One had glued together clothing and a pointed hat out of newspaper; another ran around as a white kitchen stove with his arms, legs and head sticking out. A couple street urchins had large horns on their heads and long tails tied to their backsides. They charged at all the people, and everyone, male and female, took up the game in **a** moment, taking their handkerchiefs in both hands playing the toreador. They made splendid cape movements with their arms, *media veronicas* without moving their feet, *quites*, *molinetes* and *gaoneras*. The spectators applauded and cried: “Ole!” They threw paper streamers, confetti and hollowed out eggs filled with flour, as well as carnations and nards.

Then at three o’clock they saw the tree trunk. No one had noticed where it came from— it was there, in the middle of the marketplace. It moved slowly through the crowd to one end of the marketplace and without turning around came back to the other end.

It appeared to be a thick tree trunk fully 7 feet tall. Down below, the roots did not appear to be touching the pavement, but floated about one-inch above it. Many of the limbs had broken out with fresh green leaves; above, the crown was covered with thin, but strongly animated branches that completely covered and filled out the crown of the tree. The trunk was apparently hollow, and strong enough to comfortably hide a person inside.

It appeared to be an old willow, that had grown remarkably straight and whose completely smooth bark had an almost unnatural sheen to it.

At first no one paid any attention to this stupid tree trunk that moved at a turtle's pace across the marketplace. It stopped for a moment at one end in front of a lamp post, then without turning around moved back across the marketplace in the same exact straight line it had followed before. Of all the costumes, all the foolishness, that people saw that Carnival day, it was without a doubt the most boring and tasteless joke of all.

But the tree trunk did not trouble itself about the crowd. It walked with infinite slowness back and forth across the marketplace. And even though the press of people was very heavy, after a while, it appeared as if there was a little more free space around the tree trunk. It was as if the people, without being aware of it, were keeping a small distance away from it.

Then one of the street urchins that was playing toro charged at it. His bull horns bounced against the trunk and in a moment he lay on the stones howling. The walking tree had not yielded a bit, but continued relentlessly walking along its stupid path. The people laughed, but the laughter sounded a little strained.

Gradually the free space between the tree trunk and the heaving masses became larger. The women especially, turned away when they got too close to it, always moving in ever-increasing circles to get around it. Every one of these people at the marketplace was full of all kinds of superstitions, but not one of them paid any attention to this God forsaken tree. And yet they pulled away, they didn't know why. There was something there. And so it happened that the line the tree walked back and forth on remained completely free of people.

Then, the people gradually got irritated. They mumbled about this astonishingly stupid joke, calling the tree names and cursing at it. The

person who was running around as a kitchen stove showed how courageous he was. He grabbed onto one of the limbs and gallantly led the tree trunk like a lady at a concert dance. The crowd laughed at that and the kitchen stove grinned, proud of his success. But suddenly his features distorted, he let go of the branch and fearfully ran away. Then a couple of hearty mule drivers beat at it with clubs. The tree paid no attention, moving slowly forward at the same pace, exactly on its old course, back and forth across the white marketplace. The mule drivers dropped their clubs and slumped back into the crowd.

Then one of the sailors sprang up from the bar table, a ruddy blond fellow with fluttering ribbons on his beret. He broke through the people, stormed up, seized a limb and in a moment was sitting on top of it laughing and waving his beret.

“Ole!” Rejoiced the crowd, “Ole!”

The burden did not appear to disturb the tree trunk. It moved slowly along on its course without wavering. It carried the lusty sailor across the marketplace to the lamp post, then back again without turning around. That appeared to be what confused the sailor. He was now riding backwards and he didn’t like it. His laughter died; he pulled his hat solidly down onto his head and didn’t shout any more. The laughter and the cries of the crowd were frozen in the blink of an eye and they became quiet as well. What had once seemed comical did not seem that way anymore at all.

Suddenly the sailor rose up in the middle of the branches, a great fear showed on his face. He jumped down and ran as quickly as he could back to his table. The crowd drew back with him, pressing evermore out into the streets that surrounded the marketplace. Finally the entire marketplace was empty and abandoned except for the horrible tree trunk slowly moving

across the broad stones in a straight line toward the light post and back without turning around.

Back and forth, once, once again, and again, many times. The people were no longer laughing and celebrating. There were no more paper streamers, no confetti, and no flowers. No one moved anymore, they just stood there, silent and stunned, staring out at the walking tree trunk. Then a couple of women began shrieking and the men called for the police. But they had little desire to interfere.

Finally the sailors came up. As they pushed through the crowd the tree trunk stood quietly, entirely alone in the empty marketplace. The seamen pushed at it with their hands and threw their shoulders against it. The tree trunk didn't move. They shouted, cursed, pulled out their knives and stabbed it. Finally a couple of street workers brought axes and hatchets. They began chopping it down.

The marketplace resounded with the loud chopping. They chopped off the limbs and the branches. Every single one of them were howling and celebrating. And with every chop the crowd howled wild curses. A giant Swede gave the final blow. He swung the ax twice around his head like a timber Jack in Montana and brought it down sharply, almost vertically. He chopped the first hole in the trunk.

From then on it went quickly. The axes fell in rhythm. The tree stood like before, did not yield, did not move. Then for the first time, as a great hole was chopped into it, it sank. It was as if its power had gone away. They threw it down, kicked it with their feet and rolled it across the marketplace. Then they raised it up again and enlarged the hole so they could comfortably look inside and examined the hollow trunk. There was nothing inside, nothing at all.

Still, there were people that thought there must have been a machine inside it. Others said that mischievous seamen had placed it there, from the English cruiser—perhaps a cadet or lieutenant from the ship had learned the trick from an Indian magician. There must have been someone inside the tree trunk, that was certain— (but no, said the sailors that had destroyed it, there had been nothing inside, nothing at all!) —The only thing certain was that the walking tree trunk was there on Rose Monday afternoon at the turn of the century in the marketplace of the white city of Cadiz.

How Eleven Chinese Devoured Their Bride

This is a story about sodomy and bestiality. Most people don't understand such things and don't like them. That's all right, but, if you were born a Tartar there would be no question that sodomite stories are always very funny.

If a case comes before the court, the judge, public prosecutor, clerk, lawyer and curiously even the Justice of the Peace all see the humor in it. Only the public can't see the humor. It is out of the question because the morality of the Public must not be endangered in any way.

So enjoy this mild story of our black gowned family. Naturally it is a light hearted story that will not seduce anyone into sodomy or bestiality. Especially when he sees how this abomination can get a poor devil stuck into prison for a couple years just for a small bit of pleasure.

That is still mild and humane says the Law. Things were not always so light. We read that our dear God rained both pitch and brimstone on the contaminated cities of Sodom and Gomorrah destroying them to the ground.

Only the noble Lot and his daughters were spared. His wife was turned into a naked pillar of salt simply because she once turned to look back toward these abominable cities.

Now the Lot family was not completely morally strong all the time. The behavior of the God fearing family was such that the one and only God sent angels to deliver them from this decline into abomination. How their

countrymen desired these messengers and wanted to go out with them! Lot got them drunk and pleaded with them to take his daughters and use their blessed wombs instead!

How do you say, they looked pretty only after you had a few drinks?

Nevertheless this is a funny enough story in spite of all the pitch and brimstone. Funny too are the sodomite abominations in our time.

Yet they have been horribly punished. Sodomites have been crucified, quartered, drowned, broken on the wheel, burned at the stake and still they exist in all parts of the world. The weed of sodomy and bestiality is constantly new and blooming over the entire world. No pure gardener of high morals has ever been able to eradicate it from the garden of humanity.

Impassioned human lust will always explore all possible desires of the flesh. The beat of time appoints individuals across the country and in the city. Soon here, soon there, the false God, Sodom, needs a sacrifice.

The second half of the 11th century was a blooming period for sodomy and it existed in the Order of the Templars, the infamous secret sodomite society. A small group of sodomites existed as well in Sicily and in Abruzzo. The head of their organization was in India.

Today in southern China a pretty piece from Tunis and far into the Caucasus exists an abominable city of sodomy with a temple that holds all their secret love techniques. It has followers in all the large cities of the world.

In all countries, in one city or another, there is a place where sodomy and bestiality are now blooming. First it is a bird, then a four footed beast that is strangely popular.

In the Rheinland in the old city of Mettmann the court is known for producing such amusing cases and almost as amusing punishments. The worthy citizens complain to the court and curse that which I applaud!

My friend, Justice of the Peace John, wanted to write his doctoral thesis about it.

"The Origin and Cultural Development linking the district of Mettmann to the second paragraph of Statute 175 R.-Str.-G.-B from the 12th century to today."

But the Heidelberg Judicial Faculty had little sympathy for this theme. They suggested he choose to write instead about the indebtedness of the District of Hubbelrath to the movement of the common people which is certainly very important but not half as humorous.

No one can deny that there is a humorous side to every single case of sodomy or bestiality. From the "Golden Ass" of Apuleius into modern times there is a long chain of droll and amusing anecdotes. These are all harmless crimes. It is a crying shame that medical knowledge never applies in these cases. In criminal law books all around the world the worst tortures known can be found.

These are promoted not only by the common people, but by the higher class, the so-called educated rabble. The sturdy masses merely see these incidents as humorous. Boccaccio, Aretino, Voltaire, Goethe and Balzac all have highly polished jokes about it.

Heine's sarcastic poem begins:

"Zu Berlin im Alten Schlosse
Sehen wir in Stein gemetz,
Wie ein Weib mit einem Rosse
Sodomitisch sich ergötzt."

[Translator's note:
"In an old castle in Berlin

We see chiseled in stone
How a woman with a steed
Amused herself through sodomy.”]

The Royal family has never forgotten this mockery of their illustrious ancestor depicted in this joke as a steed lustful woman. Who can really be further offended? Friedrich the Great had a great laugh over it even though he stopped work on Voltaire’s rough draft of him with his greyhounds because it was not to his taste.

He found himself in good company with Voltaire’s “Pucelle”, which depicted the virgin, Joan of Arc, after her conquest of Orleans riding an ass into a bedroom. Voltaire really intended the love as only allegory and the ass signifying the Catholic Church.

Such humor is known to date from the 18th century and while not appreciated by the common folk, was by the Lords that ruled over them. They rewrote the language and revised an old judgment where a poor fellow that had been caught in obscenities with a goat should be burned at the stake. “The offender must burn,” so declared the Law. The clever Lords revised it to read, “The goat must burn”.

Friedrich the Great was an animal lover with a great sense of humor. When a cavalry member was caught making love to his mare he hung them both along with a sign that read, “The fellow wanted to be transferred to the infantry”. Today he would hardly be reported by his comrades.

The sodomy and bestiality in hidden bloom during World War I was so pervasive there were constant jokes about it. A cow was called Mrs. Sergeant-Major Lieutenant in the East and such four legged soldier wives existed in all armies around the world.

That is simply the way things are and no cleric or judge can change it. Everyone knows that centaurs, fauns, and other mythological beasts come from the interbreeding of human and animal species. We all know they come about through this horrible obscenity but no one really sees any wrong in it.

It is the same with this incidentally full blooded adventure of the eleven Chinese that I will now relate. This story of strange love is not meant to be taken in an evil way.

So, there were these eleven Chinese in Chicago—

But no, I must begin it differently. My friend Fritz Lange lived in Chicago. He owned a laundry business. Really he was a land assessor and gambled on the hounds, but not in this story.

Over in America a man can do what he wants. He can be a waiter, dishwasher, bill poster, carriage maker or anything. Fritz finally had some luck and married the daughter of a laundry owner. He began working there to learn the business so that when the old man died he could take over and do well with it.

Now he had built it into a mighty laundry business with a dozen pickup and delivery points scattered throughout the city. One day he came to me very excited. I needed to help him. Eleven of his workers had been arrested. Chinese naturally, they are equally the best and the cheapest washers in the city. I could help him because I knew the criminal judge that had the case.

It was Judge Mc Ginty, whom I played stud poker with twice a week. Now Mc Ginty was a sociable man and liked to talk. He didn’t want the eleven fellows to get off easily and it would be hard to get them released. The eleven Chinese were confined because they had beaten up a God wretched pathetic red-haired fourteen year old Irish rascal named Jackie Murphy.

“Why did they beat him up?” I asked.

“He seduced the bride,” said Fritz Lange.

“That’s not going to be good,” I opinioned. “Judge Mc Ginty is very much a son of Erin and will certainly decide for the young rascal against the yellow brothers. Still, many a man can be persuaded by whiskey.”

“It is so dangerous!” my friend Lange cried. “The bride, that’s what my Chinese call her! The bride is not the bride of just one, but strangely of all eleven! To them she is not just a feminine being of white or yellow color! In short, the bride of the eleven is not human. To be entirely correct she is strangely enough a four legged sow!”

“And Jackie seduced her?” I asked.

“Entirely correct,” nodded the land assessor. “The Chinese here live on nothing. They just save and save through the days and through the years until they have enough to go back home with a full purse. There is only one thing they can’t renounce and that is the desires of the flesh in any form. They are horny as apes and can’t stop themselves. They must have something so the eleven fellows went out and bought a pig. From an economical standpoint it is certainly a clever idea, you could scarcely find anything cheaper.

They all live together in a basement apartment and the sow lives there with them. Jackie, the son of the house manager, was hiding and saw the entire obscenity go down. Then, when my Chinese were at work he snuck into the cellar and climbed into the circular pen with their lover. With him it made an even dozen. When the Chinese found out, the jealousy grew so strong in their love-struck fruitcake souls that they beat the red-haired rascal half to death.”

“Thunderation!” I cried. “That looks very bad. Does Judge Mc Ginty know all this?”

“Naturally he knows,” answered Fritz Lange. “Jackie’s father had the Chinese arrested. They apologized for the atrocity and for mishandling the boy, but when they found out they were going to prison they started screaming that Jackie was the 12th and in league with them. That’s when he first learned from the Chinese what really happened.”

“What will the outcome be?”

“Twenty years in prison is the minimum according to the Law in the State of Illinois. They are not as mild here as they are across the ocean! And I have lost my best workers! But there is still a chance. The case is still with the police and has not yet gone to court. I’ve always been on friendly terms with the police. I need you to take this to Judge Mc Ginty.”

He reached into a bag and brought out a large piece of Nephritis, Imperial Jade, of the most glorious green color and wonderfully cut into the shape of an enormous turkey. It was easily worth more than a few hundred dollars.

“Here,” he cried. “The fellows have given me this. It is something very valuable that can possibly get them out of this jam. Take this to Judge Mc Ginty; I think he will talk with you.”

So I took the stone and went to Mc Ginty but he was not home. His wife greeted me. She was pretty and distinguished, despite being fifty-four years old, and she understood the situation. I gladly showed her my lump of jade and her eyes got bigger and bigger.

“I received this as a present,” I said weakly. “ I wondered if your husband was interested in it. I could really use a few dollars right now.”

At that moment Mc Ginty came.

“Buy it!” His wife cried out to him. “I’ve been wishing for a piece like that for many years. He’s letting it go really cheap, only—”

The Judge took the glorious piece and set it down on the table.

“Come with me,” he said. “I don’t want her to hear our little chat.”

He took me around back despite the pleading of his wife who stood with both hands clasped together in front of her.

“God, I’ve got fifty dollars,” she cried after us.

“What’s this about?” he asked me out on the street.

“It’s like this,” I said. “You know about those Chinese that were arrested yesterday. My friend Lange needs his workers and wants them released. The fellows gave him this stone to sell so they could get some money for their defense.”

Mc Ginty looked at me sharply.

“I know it’s not right—,” he began. “What do you know about this?”

“Nothing special,” I lied. “They beat up a fourteen-year old.”

“Nothing else?” The honorable judge asked.

He winked at me and gave me a poke in the ribs.

“Nothing that I can remember,” I laughed.

Judge Mc Ginty chuckled, and then he said. “Good, I will buy this stone because my wife wants it so badly. But I can’t give you more than ten dollars for it. There, that is enough for your defense. Go quickly to Jim Mc Namus, the lawyer, you know him. Give him the ten dollars—wait a minute,” He put down another. “There, he gets one for each. The rascal Murphy must defend his son because he is Irish, he won’t talk.

Tell Mc Namus to be in court at 6:00 this evening to get this over with quickly. Now, please excuse me. I must go to my wife and bring her this little thing she is so madly in love with.”

He played with the stone on the table.

Judge Mc Ginty knew what he was talking about. I was at the criminal court that evening. A policeman said that the eleven coolies had beaten the

young Murphy. The rascal said nothing. The Chinese said nothing. The defense asked for a mild sentence.

Judge Mc Ginty ruled that each pay a dollar to the state and another in damages to the father of the youth. Fritz Lange immediately paid the twenty-two dollars and another twenty-five for the cost of the proceedings. Everyone went home happy. It didn't take over five minutes.

A week later Fritz Lange stopped by. I should go with him to his Chinese, he said. They wanted to thank me. So I went with him. We went down into the cellar, all eleven were there and so was the young red-haired rascal Murphy.

They were very polite to me, offered me Saki and a little rice. Then the feast began. It was pork sausage. They had been taken in once and paid dearly.

"We are not doing that again," they said.

So they slaughtered their bride, and consumed her with enviable appetites.

I like to think that I am moderately open-minded and unprejudiced. I am no food critic, but it was a bit too much for me.

From the Journal of an Orange Tree

"Oh, how many sorcerers, how many sorceresses, are there among us, of whom no one knows!"

Ariosto: Orlando Furioso. Ges. VIII, 1.

Isle of Porquerolles, June 1905

Dear Herr Medical Councilor, after careful consideration and with well thought out intent I will follow your wish and fill out the pages of this notebook that you have given me. It will deal only with the battle between the two of us, with you as the head doctor of this private lunatic asylum and me, the patient that was committed here three days ago. The complaint on which I was forcibly admitted here, excuse a student of law if he prefers to use a legal image!—Is that I "Suffer from the delusion of being an orange tree".

Now Herr Medical Councilor, attempt to provide evidence that my delusion is false. If you succeed in convincing me that your opinion is correct I will be instantly "healed". Isn't that true? Prove to me that I am a man like all the others and merely suffering from a complete nerve collapse or pathological monomania like many thousands of sick people in all the sanitariums of the world. If you can prove this to me you will have given me back my life again, the neurosis will be blown away in an instant.

On the other hand, I, as the accused, have the right to prove the truth by presenting factual evidence myself. It is the purpose of these lines, dear Herr Medical Councilor, to convince you of the undisputable truth of my

assertion. You see that I think very objectively, every word is calmly weighed. I heartily regret the scene I made the day before yesterday. It distresses me very much that I disturbed the tranquility of your house through my silly behavior.

Please consider though, that if someone like you, dear Medical Councilor, or some other healthy person was suddenly tricked and deceitfully brought into an insane asylum he would not behave much differently. Our hour-long conference yesterday evening has calmed me completely. I know that my relatives and fraternity brothers only wanted what was best for me when they brought me here. Now I also believe that it was the best thing.

If I succeed in convincing you, Herr Medical Councilor, a psychiatrist of world renown, of the correctness of my assertion, then even the greatest skeptics must bow before this so-called “miracle”. You ask me to write in this notebook as detailed an autobiography as possible, a *curriculum vitae* of the course of my life, as well as my thoughts about what you call my “delusion”. I understand quite well, that you, a true servant of science, want to get as true as possible a picture of the illness out of the patient himself. I wish to comply with even the smallest of your wishes, under the definite assumption that you, after recognizing your error, will offer me a helping hand as I from hour to hour take on the real form of a tree. When you look through my papers, Herr Medical Councilor, which have been in your possession for some time now, you will find the announcement of my doctoral exam and a detailed curriculum that contains the outward particulars of my life. Therefore I can be very brief here.

You will gather from the documents that I am the son of a Rheinish industrialist; took my final exam at 18 years; served my one-year term with a Berlin guard regiment; enjoyed my youth as a student of law at various

universities; in between times made a series of greater and lesser travels and finally moved here to Bonn to prepare for my bar exam and doctoral exam. All of that has just as little interest for you, Herr Medical Counselor, as it does for me.

The history that we are interested in first began on 22 February of last year. On that day at a Fasching Ball I made the acquaintance of the—at the danger of appearing ridiculous I will write it down—sorceress who has transformed me into an orange tree. It is completely necessary to say a few words about this lady, to whom I was introduced at this celebration. Frau Emy Steenhop has a very striking appearance that irresistibly draws all eyes to her. I won't try to describe her allure; you would just smile at it as an exaggeration of someone in love. Yet it is a fact, of all my friends and acquaintances, there was not one of us that was not captivated in a moment, that did not consider himself lucky for any glance, for any word that she might bestow upon him.

At that time Frau Emy Steenhop had been living for some two months in a spacious garden villa on Koblenz Street, which she had furnished exceptionally tastefully. She kept an open house in which the officers of the King's hussars and the members of the most respected fraternities gathered every evening. It is true that no ladies associated with her, yet I am convinced that is only because, as Frau Steenhop so frequently laughingly explained, "Even the dead could not endure such women's chatter". The lady associated even less with any other families in Bonn at that time. It is understandable that the gossip in the little town soon occupied itself with the conspicuous stranger who daily drove her snow white 64 hp Mercedes through the streets. Soon scandalous rumors went from mouth-to-mouth about the nightly orgies on Koblenz Street.

The clerics fought a vicious campaign and even brought out an absurd story entitled "A Modern Messalina"—its beginning words were "*Quousque tandem*"—in any case, the highly refined gentleman should at least edit his document.

[Translator's note: *"Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra"* is a Latin phrase from Marcus Tullius Cicero's first speech against Catilina. It means "*How long, Catiline, will you abuse our patience?*".]

I can assure you, and am convinced that all the gentlemen that ever had the honor of being received by Frau Emy Steenhop would agree that nothing ever happened in her house that would go against the strictest social forms in the least. A hand kiss—that was the only thing the lady permitted her worshipers—and that was all that ever happened, except once the little hussar colonel was permitted to press his military mustache on her white forearm. Frau Emy Steenhop had us all on such short strings that we were well behaved like pages and served our lady in a romantic, almost chivalrous fashion.

Nevertheless, it happened. Her house suddenly became desolate. On 16 May I had traveled back home for my mother's birthday. When I returned, to my amazement, I discovered that further visits to the house of the beautiful Frau were forbidden. It was a command given by the ranking officer of the hussar regiment. The fraternities immediately followed this example for their members as well. I asked on what grounds; my fraternity brothers shared that a regimental order was binding on them as well. It was not possible for a house fraternity to reverse such an order. Indeed, both institutions had great respect for each other and many fraternity members served with the hussars or belonged to the regiment as reserve officers. Not even the officers themselves knew the basis of the colonel's actions.

Yet they presumed that it had something to do with the sudden disappearance of Lieutenant Bohlen, though they didn't have the slightest idea why. Harry von Bohlen was personally close to me, so that same evening I went to the hussar officers club in order to perhaps learn more particulars. The colonel received me very cordially, invited me to have a glass of champagne, but avoided speaking of the affair. When I finally asked right to his face, he curtly, but politely, refused to answer. I made one last attempt and said:

"Herr Colonel! Your orders and those of the fraternity are certainly binding for your officers and fraternity students, but they are not binding for me. I can still quit my association and then be master of my own affairs."

"Do whatever you want!" the colonel answered carelessly.

"I beg you to patiently listen to me for a moment," I continued. "Perhaps another would not miss the house on Koblenz Street that much. He might sigh at times with regret as he remembered the beautiful evenings and then finally forget them. But I—"

He interrupted me. "Young man," he cried. "You are the fourth person that has given me this speech! Two of my lieutenants and one of your fraternity brothers were already here the day before yesterday. I have given both lieutenants furlough and they are now preparing to leave. I have given your fraternity brother the same advice. I can only tell you the same thing as well. You must forget, do you hear!—One sacrifice is enough!"

"At least explain a little of it to me, Herr Colonel!" I pressed. "I don't know anything at all and there is nowhere else to find out. Does your order have anything to do with the disappearance of Bohlen?"

"Yes," said the colonel.

"What happened to him?"

"I don't know," he answered. "And I fear I will never know."

I grabbed onto both of his hands. “Tell me what you know,” I begged, and I felt that there was a tremor in my voice that must compel him to answer.

“For God’s sake, tell me what happened to Bohlen and why you gave that command.”

He pulled himself loose and said, “Thunderation, it really seems to be much worse with you than with the others!”

He poured both mugs full and pushed mine over to me.

“Drink, drink,” he cried.

I downed the champagne and bent forward.

“Tell me,” he continued and looked at me sharply, “weren’t you the one that recited the poem that time?”

“Yes,” I stammered.

The colonel stroked his mustache.

“I was almost jealous of you then,” he said thoughtfully. “Our fairy permitted you to kiss her hand twice. Were they really your poems? They were about all kinds of flowers.”

“Yes, I wrote the poems myself,” I replied.

“It was frightful nonsense!” he said, as if to himself. “Excuse me,” he continued out loud. “I understand absolutely nothing about poetry, absolutely nothing at all. It’s possible that they were very beautiful. The fairy thought so.”

“But Herr Colonel,” I interjected, “what does any of this have to do with my poems? You were going to—”

“Certainly, I wanted to tell you something else,” he interrupted me. “But I’m doing it because of the poems. They say that people who write poems are all dreamers. I believe that poor fellow Bohlen, also secretly wrote poems.”

“What does that have to do with Bohlen,” I pressed.

He ignored the interruption.

“And dreamers,” he extended his line of thought further, “apparently dreamers are the ones that are easiest for her to capture. I want to warn you, Herr, as much as I am able to.”

He straightened up.

“Now listen,” he said very seriously. “Seven days ago Lieutenant Bohlen didn’t show up for duty. I sent someone over to his apartment, but he was gone. The police helped us; the district attorney’s office took all possible steps without any success. And despite the short time that has passed since then, I, for one am convinced that all further efforts will prove fruitless. There is no reason for it. Bohlen was very capable, had no debts, was very healthy and very happy in his occupation as a cavalry officer. He left nothing behind except a short note to me—whose contents I cannot share with you.”

I was seized by a boundless disappointment that my face immediately betrayed.

“Wait!” The colonel continued. “I hope that I can tell you enough to at least save you. I believe that Lieutenant Bohlen is dead, that he took his own life in a spirit of mental derangement.”

“He wrote that?” I interrupted.

The colonel shook his head. “No,” he said. “Not one word! He only wrote, “Now I am going to disappear. I am not a person anymore. I am a Myrtle tree.”

“What?” I cried.

“Yes,” said the colonel “A Myrtle tree! He believed that he had been turned into a Myrtle tree by the sorceress, by Frau Emy Steenhop.”

“But that is just a stupid fantasy!” I cried.

The colonel once more directed his searching, sympathetic gaze upon me.

“Fantasy?” he repeated. “You call it fantasy but it can also be called madness. One thing is certain. Because of it our poor comrade has gone into the ground. He believed he was bewitched. Weren’t we all a little bewitched by the beautiful Frau? Haven’t I, an old ass, been acting like a schoolboy fawning on her? I tell you, every evening an extreme yearning falls over me to go over to her Villa and press my gray mustache on her soft skin. And I see that it is not any different for my officers. First lieutenant Count Arco, whom I sent on leave yesterday, admitted to me that he spent five long hours in the moonlight pacing back and forth and I fear he was not the only one.

With grim humor I fight down my own secret desire and am the last one in the officer’s club every night just to give a good example. I assure you, I have drank more champagne this week than I have for years—but it has no taste—Drink! Drink! Bacchus is the enemy of Venus.”

He poured the glasses full again and continued;

“Now look here young Herr, if such a prosaic fellow as I can’t get rid of the itch or when a ladies’ man like Arco takes lonely walks in the moonlight, why shouldn’t I be afraid that Bohlen will not be the only one? I have no wish to see my officer corps transformed into a Myrtle forest!”

“Thank you Herr Colonel,” I said. “Without a doubt you have handled things correctly from your viewpoint.”

He smiled. “Very kind of you to recognize that,” he mocked. “But you would oblige me more if you followed my advice. I was once the elder, so to speak, the leader of a witch’s cult on Koblenz Street. Now I am the one that is responsible for everyone, not only for my officers. And I have the feeling—nothing more than a feeling, but I can’t get rid of it, that still more

disaster will come from that beautiful Frau. You can call me an old fool, a fool, but promise me you will never again set foot in that house!"

He spoke so seriously, so intently, that a strange fear suddenly gripped me as well.

"Yes Herr Colonel!" I said.

"It would be best if you went on a trip for a few months like the others have done. Arco has gone to Paris with your fraternity brother, you can go there too! That will distract you and you will forget the sorceress."

I replied, "Yes Herr Colonel!"

"Your hand on it!" he cried.

I reached out my right hand and he gave it a mighty shake.

"I will pack my things immediately and take the afternoon train," I said firmly.

"Good!" he cried and wrote a few words on his business card. "Here is the name of the hotel in which Arco and your friend are staying. Greet them both for me, have some fun, raise a little hell for my sake, but come back to me—without that—gloomy smile!"

He stroked the corner of my mouth with his index finger as if he wanted to smooth it out.

I immediately ran back home with the firm intention to depart in three hours. My bags stood there already packed. I took a few things out and put some others back in. Then I sat down at the writing table and wrote my father a short letter in which I informed him of my trip and asked him to send some money to Paris for me. As I was looking for an envelope my glance fell on a thin stack of letters and postcards which had arrived while I was away.

I thought, "They can stay there until I come back from Paris."

Then I reached out my hand—and pulled it back again.

“No, I don’t want to read them,” I said.

I took a coin out of my pocket and thought, “If it’s heads, I read them.”—I tossed the coin onto the table. It was tails.—”All right then,” I said. “I won’t read them.”

In the same moment I became annoyed over this stupidity and reached for the letters. There were a few bills, invitations, advertisements—then a violet envelope that bore my name in large, bold letters. I knew immediately that was why I had not wanted to look at the letters. I weighed the letter thoughtfully in my hand, but knew that I had to read it. I had never seen the handwriting before, yet I knew that it was from her. Suddenly I said to myself, “Now it begins.”

I didn’t mean anything by it. I had no idea what was now supposed to begin. But I was afraid. I tore open the envelope and read:

“My friend! Don’t forget to bring the orange blossoms this evening.

Emy Steenhop”

The letter had been written ten days earlier, on the day that I had gone back home. The evening prior to that I had explained to her that I had seen orange blossoms blooming in the gardener’s greenhouse and she had expressed the desire to have some blossoms. Early the next morning before my departure I had gone to the gardener and contracted him to send some blossoms to her that evening along with a card.

I read the lines very calmly, stuck the letter in my pocket and then tore up the letter to my father. I gave no thought at all to the promise I had made to the colonel. I looked at my watch—nine-thirty. That was the time she preferred to receive her visitors. I called for a cab and got dressed.

I went to the gardener and he let me cut some blossoms. Then, finally, I was in front of her villa. I was announced and the maid led me into a small room. I sat down on the sofa and stroked the soft guanaco pelt that lay over it.

Then she entered the room in a long yellow silk tea robe. Her black hair was parted in the middle and fell over her ears in light ringlets like the women of Lucas Cranach. She was a little pale and a violet gleam shone out of her eyes.

"That is because she is wearing yellow," I thought.

"I was away," I said, "for my mother's birthday. I just got back this evening a few hours ago."

She hesitated a moment.

"Just this evening?" she repeated. "Then you don't know—"

She interrupted herself, "Naturally you know!"

She smiled.

"They would have told you everything in a couple of hours!"

I remained quiet and twisted my blossoms.

"Naturally they did," she continued. "And still you found your way here? I thank you."

She reached out her hand to me and I kissed it.

Then she said very softly, "I knew that you would come."

I straightened up.

"Gracious Frau," I said. "I found your letter upon my return and have hastened to bring you the blossoms."

She smiled.

"Don't lie!" she cried. "You knew ten days ago that I wrote the letter and sent me blossoms then."

She took the branches out of my hand and put them up to her face.

“Orange blossoms,—orange blossoms,” she said slowly. “How magnificent they smell!”

She looked straight at me and continued:

“You don’t need any excuse to come here—You came here because you had to, didn’t you?”

I bowed.

“Sit down, my friend,” said Frau Emy Steenhop. “We will drink some tea!”

She rang the bell.

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Believe me, Herr Medical Councilor! I could repeat to you word for word every single conversation from each of the many evenings that I spent with the Lady. My memories are chiseled as if in bronze. I will never forget one movement of her hand, or the light play of her eye brows—I will pick out the essential particulars to form the image that you desire from me.

Once Frau Emy Steenhop said, “Do you know what happened to Harry Bohlen?”

I replied, “I know what the people say.”

She asked, “Do you believe that I turned him into a myrtle tree?”

I took her hand to kiss it.

“If that is what you desired, beautiful Frau,” I laughed. “Then I will gladly believe it.”

But she pulled her hand away. She spoke—and her voice rang with such certainty that I trembled.

"I believe it!"

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She expressed the desire that I bring her orange blossoms every evening. One evening as I once more handed her the white blossoms she whispered, "Astolf."

Then she continued more loudly:

"Yes, I will call you Astolf. And if you like, you can call me Alcina."

I know, dear Herr Medical Councilor, how little leisure time you have to occupy yourself with old stories and sagas. So presumably these two names will mean nothing to you at all while to me they instantly revealed a terrible and yet sweet wonder. If you knew of Ludovico Ariosto, if you had read some of the heroic stories of Cinquecento, you would be familiar with the beautiful fairy Alcina. She captured Astolf from the land of angels in her net as well as the mighty Rudiger, the son of Haimon Reinold of Montalban, the knight of Bayard and many other heroes and paladins. And when she became tired of her lovers she turned them into trees—

She laid her hands on my shoulders and looked at me.

"If I were Alcina," she said, "would you like to be my Astolf?"

I said nothing, but my eyes answered her.

Then she said, "Come!"

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You are a psychiatrist, Herr Medical Counselor, and I know that you are an esteemed authority. I have often read your name in all sorts of papers. People talk about you, say that you have developed a new theory. Now I believe that one person alone has never developed a so called new theory by themselves. Instead these ideas appear in the heads of different people at the same time. I hope that your new theory of the human psyche will perhaps include my own as well. It is this feeling that allows me to place such unbounded trust in you.

Isn't it true that thought is the ultimate, is the only thing that is real. It is boyish nonsense to think of matter as something tangibly real. That which I can see, touch and grasp with my own senses, can also appear to be something entirely different with the aid of some simple instruments.

A drop of water appears to be a small, clear and transparent ball to my poor human senses. But under a microscope like the ones children play with, I learn that it is a playground for wildly battling germs. That is a higher perspective—but not the highest. There is no doubt that in a hundred years they will smile at our most brilliant scientific instruments, just as we do now at the instruments of Asclepius.

Therefore, the most miraculous instruments are no more useful than my poor senses. Matter is always something different than what we perceive it to be. Not only can I never completely understand the essence of matter, there is no essence to understand. When I spray the drops of water against the hot stove they vaporize in an instant. When I throw a piece of sugar into

my tea it dissolves. If I smash the cup which I drink from, I will have shards, but no cup any more.

But if Being can be turned into not-Being with the turn of a hand it is not worth speaking of as Being. Not- Being, death, is the only essence of all matter. Life is only a negation of this essence for an infinitely short span of time—but the thought of these water drops, these pieces of sugar, remains unchanging. It can never be broken, evaporated or dissolved. Isn't it much truer to speak of these thoughts as reality than it is of fleeting matter?

Now we are human, Herr Medical Councilor, just as material as everything around us. Any chemist can easily tell us the percentage of oxygen, nitrogen, hydrogen and so on which we contain. But if thought can manifest in us—what right do we have to assume that it can't manifest in other physical matter as well?

I always use the term "thought", Herr Medical Counselor, only on the basis that it best fits the sense of what I am personally trying to express. Like how different languages use different words for the same concept. Like how the Italians call the thing we speak with "bocca", while the English say "mouth", the French say "bouche" and the Germans say "Mund". In the same way the sciences and arts have different words for the same thing. What I call "thought" the theosophist designates as "God", the mystic uses "soul", the doctor uses "consciousness". You, Herr Medical Counselor, might perhaps choose the word "psyche". But you will agree with me that this concept, whatever you want to call it, is the original and at the same time the only reality that there is.

Now if this isolated concept has all the properties that the theologians attribute to their so called personal God, then it is infinite, eternal and boundless. If it manifests in our brains why shouldn't it exist and manifest

openly in other things as well? I can think of few more comfortable dwelling places than the brains of some people.

This is nothing new at all. Millions of people have believed in all ages —and still believe today—that the soul exists in animals as well. For example the teachings of Buddha have taken up the theory of transmigration of the soul. What prevents us from going a step further and placing souls in springs, trees and boulders, like they did—perhaps only out of poetic-aesthetic grounds—in ancient Greece?

Yes, I believe that the time has come, that human understanding has evolved to the point where it is capable of recognizing the souls in other organic life.

I already spoke to you of my poems that I once read to the Lady, the ones the colonel called frightful nonsense. They could well be—I have no opinion over them. Further, they are only a stammering attempt to express the souls of a few flowers in human language.

How does it happen that the eucalyptus tree evokes in every artist the thought of the longing and outstretched arms of a naked woman? That the daffodil unconsciously reminds us of death? That wisteria enchants us with the image of a pastor's blonde little daughter and the orchid reminds us of a witch's Sabbath and black masses?

For this reason—it is because those thoughts live in those flowers and trees.

Do you believe it is coincidence that the rose is the symbol of love with all the peoples of the world? That the violet is the symbol of modesty? There are hundreds of fragrant little flowers that bloom just as hidden and concealed as the violet. None of them have the same effect on us. But when we pick a violet we instinctively think of modesty. This strange feeling does not come out of the little flower to us through our other senses; it comes to

us through its fragrance. Take a bottle of “Vera violetta”, whose fragrance is so deceptive that you can’t distinguish it from a large bouquet of violets in the dark, and you will never get the same feeling.

In the same way the thought of the eternally victorious masculine which seizes us, against our wills, in the vicinity of a blooming chestnut tree has nothing at all to do with that which first meets our senses, the mighty trunk, the broad leaves or the thousands of glowing, blooming candles. Only after consideration do we come to the realization that here it is the scarcely noticeable fragrance that reveals the thought, the soul of the tree to us.

Apparently the concept, which I call “thought”, can take on all forms and shapes. The very fact that I or anyone else can share the same thought is already full proof of this. Thought knows no boundaries, so it is not limited by physical matter at all. Today no person can avoid the insight that truth is —really relative like everything else—a monistic world view, that teaches us humans that the physical part of us is no different than any other physical matter. When I admit this, I must also on the other hand admit the existence of thought—in its true and most powerful sense—In that very moment I am forced to a realization, forced to only one conclusion that is confirmed, by the way, through thousands of examples.

Thought does not only exist in humans, if you will, but is also capable of penetrating everything else that is physical. Why wouldn’t we find it in the trunks, leaves and blossoms of an orange tree?)

For the Faustian natured philosopher this consists of the belief, which civilized people have also accepted, expressed in these introductory words, “In the beginning was the word”. They leave it at that and never get beyond this mysterious “Logos”. That is until some great revelation is someday revealed in its entirety in some one’s head. Then the human brain; which is

created from the physical matter of this dead star that we call earth, will achieve perfection as a result.

But it is wrong that all the people, like the mystics, believe in such a revelation of the "Logos" and continue on in their occupations, always assuming that it will come suddenly, like a bolt of lightning. It will come like it has always come, slowly, step by step, like the sun evolved out of cosmic dust and humans out of amoeba primitiva.

It is infinite and never ending. That is why it will never achieve perfection.

No hour goes by, no second, in which thought is not revealed, larger and more majestic than before. Ever more and more we recognize this concept, *that thought is everything*.

And an ever greater realization which I believe is that it is reflected in my brain. Oh, I don't imagine that I am the only one. I already told you, Herr Medical Councilor, that I believe a thought never bears fruit in one brain alone. But the semen of the spirit is withered in many, and only blossoms in a few.

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One night the Frau, whom I call Alcina, covered the entire bed on which we lay with orange branches. When she wrapped herself around me her delicate nostrils trembled as they pressed tightly against my neck.

"My friend," she said, "you smell like the blossoms!"

I laughed and believed that she was joking—but later I became convinced that she was right.

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One day the land lady where I live came into my room. She sniffed around in the air and said:

“Oh how good that smells! Do you have more orange branches here?”

But I had not had any blossoms in my room for several days.

I said to myself, “Both could be deceiving themselves. The human nose is not a highly developed organ.”

But my hunting dog would not be deceived. His nose was infallible. So I made an experiment. I often had my dog fetch an orange branch in my dwelling and in the garden. I would hide it carefully and then instruct him to bring it when I cried, “Fetch the blossoms!” He always brought the branch back after a short time from even the most hidden place.

Then I waited several days without any blossoms in my dwelling. One morning I took the animal along with to the swimming pool. As I climbed out of the water I cried:

“Ali! Go! Fetch the blossoms!”

The hunting dog lifted his head up high in the air, sniffed a couple of times and then without further thought came up to me. I went into my bathing stall and showed him my clothing that perhaps still had some remnant of fragrance left on them. But the dog scarcely sniffed them and

again sniffed at me. *It was my flesh that gave off the fragrance that he smelled.*

Now, Herr Medical Councilor, if that happened with the dog and his highly developed organ, don't you need to wonder if you have made the same mistake assuming I had branches with me. Yesterday evening after you left my room, I heard what you said to the servant in the hallway. When I was out in the garden for a stroll he was supposed to carefully search through my room and take out any orange branches. I don't take this badly of you. You believed that I had such blossoms hidden away and held it as your duty to remove anything that would remind me of my delusion. Herr Medical Councilor, you can spare your servant the effort. He can search in my room for hours and not find any blossoms. *But when you visit me again you will once more smell the fragrance that comes from out of my flesh.*

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Once I dreamed that I walked through a wide garden at noon time, past a round fountain, through a pagoda with broken marble columns and over a long smooth lawn. I saw a tree that shimmered all over with blood red fiery oranges. *Then I knew that I was that tree.*

The soft wind played in my leaves and in expansive infinite desire I extended my full limbs outward. A tall Frau in a wide yellow robe came walking up the white gravel path. Her gaze caressed me out of deep violet eyes.

Then my thick branches rustled, "Pick some of my fruit, Alcina!"

She understood this speech, raised a white arm and broke off a branch with five or six golden fruit. There was a soft, sweet pain and I awoke. I saw her crouching right next to me on the soft pale yellow furs. Her eyes were staring at me so curiously.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

“Hush!” she whispered. “I am listening to your dreams.”

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On one afternoon we traveled over the Rhine from Dragon Rock down to Heisterbach cloister. She threw herself down onto the grass behind the ivy covered ruins. I sat near her and deeply breathed in the air of the linden trees, lifted my breast and stretched my arms out wide.

“Yes,” she said and closed her eyes with their deep lashes, “yes, spread your branches out! How cool it is to rest in your shadow!”

Then she told me—

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Oh, throughout the nights she would talk to me; tell me ancient sagas, fairytales and stories. She always had her eyes closed. Her delicate lips

opened only a little and her words dropped out of her mouth ringing like silver bells.

"You stole my girdle from me," said Flordelis to her knight. "Bring me another one that is worthy of me!"

Then blonde Gryph saddled his horse and hunted through all the lands of the world to obtain a girdle for his mistress. He battled with giants and knights, with witches and necromancers and won the most magnificent girdles. But he threw them in the dust, or in the laps of beggars, and cried that they were poor rags and not worthy of adorning the loins of his Lady. And after he wrested the girdle of Venus herself away from the mighty Rodomont, he tore it into shreds and swore that he wanted to create a girdle for her that even a goddess had never worn. Then he defeated the sorcerer Atlas and stole his winged horse. He rode in the air through wind and storm and with impudent hands tore the Milky Way down from the heavens.

He came back to his mistress and kissed her white feet. Then he placed the girdle around her hips, from out of which many thousand stars twinkled like jewels—

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"Read to me what you wrote about the orchids," she said.

So I read to her.

When the Devil
Was a woman
She was Lilith
Her black hair coiled
In heavy knots
And her pale features
Were surrounded
And framed
With Botticelli's
Confused thoughts
When she softly smiled
At the gold bands
And colored stones
On all of her narrow fingers
When she read Bourget
And loved Huysmans
When she understood
Maeterlinck's silence
And her soul bathed
In the colors
Of Gabriel D'Annunzio
She once laughed—
And when the Princess
Laughed a little serpent
Sprang out of her mouth
This most beautiful Devil
Stroked the serpent

This queen stroked the serpent
With her be-ringed fingers
So that it turned, hissed,
Hissed, hissed
And sprayed venom
Lilith collected the drops
And sprinkled them
Over her heavy copper vase
Of moist earth,
Black, moist earth
Her vast hands moved lightly
All around the
Heavy copper vase
Caressing it
Softly her pale lips sang
Her old spell—
Her spell rang
Like a child's rhyme
Soft and languid,
Languid like the kisses
From her mouth
The moist earth drank
And life arose in the vase
Enticed by her languid kisses
Enticed by her soft sounds
And slowly out
Of the black earth crept
Orchids—

In front of the favorite
Mirroring her
Pale features
Surrounded with
Botticelli vipers
Creeping sideways
Out of the copper vase
Orchids—
Devil's flowers
Those of the old earth
That through Lilith's spell
And specially prepared
Serpent's venom
Had been brought
Into the light,
Orchids—
Devil's flowers

"That is beautiful," said Alcina.

* *

*

Yes, Herr Medical Councilor, such was our life, a fairy tale woven out of the rays of the sun. We breathed in a lost past and a never suspected future grew out of our kisses.

And always clearer, oh so crystal clear, became the harmony of our dreams. Once she interrupted me in the middle of a song.

She said, "—Hush!" and pressed her face tightly against my breast. I could feel how her delicate nostrils trembled against my flesh—for just a minute.

Then she lifted her head and said, "You don't need to speak. I can smell your thoughts."

She closed her eyes—*and slowly recited my verse to the end*—

—Or she would take my head tightly in her arms and stroke my temples with her slender fingers. Then I felt how her desire slipped into me, flattering and taking possession of my soul. It played through my temples like sweet music, like a song of dancing sun beams.

Where the green plains extend, where cool mountain water springs over marble slabs, where large butterflies flutter between magnolia blossoms and white peacocks dream their lonely dreams, there stands a tree.

It extends its limbs out all in all directions and the fragrance of marriage and love fills the air around it. White blossoms rise out of its leaves, and golden fruit shimmers in between.

A fairy rests in its cool shade. She tells fairytales to the tree that is her lover. She speaks and he rustles in the wind and sends his fragrance to her. That is how they chat.

* *

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So the realization grew in me, slowly, gradually, just like all revelations come. It was so harmonious that I did not notice a single milestone. The few particulars that I gave you, Herr Medical Councilor, came out of a thousand that I could have used. The miracle began the first time I saw this Frau—or perhaps it began even earlier. Couldn't my poems, for example, be a first weak expression of my thought?

But the miracle will be complete when I stand there outside in the sun bearing white blossoms and golden red fruit. In the meantime the transformation proceeds quietly, strong and fully aware without any conscious resistance.

It is not only the soul, but the body as well. Didn't I already tell you that all my flesh is saturated with this sweet fragrance?—You will be convinced yet, Herr Medical Counselor!

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Then the last nights came. She once said to me:

"I must leave you soon."

That did not frighten me. Every second with her was like an eternity, and my happy arms would be permitted to embrace her through even more infinite eternities. I nodded and she continued.

"You know what will happen then, Astolf?"

I nodded again and asked, "Where are you going?"

Then two tears fell down her cheeks. She straightened up and her eyes glowed like lonely night stars over the ice covered steppe.

“Over the ocean,” she said, “from where I came—but I will write to you—and then later, when you are blooming outside, when the light breeze plays in your branches, then later, I will come again. I will come to you my love, and dream our sweetest dreams with you.”

“My love,” she said, “my love!”

And as green ivy tendrils twine around a trunk and branches, she embraced me—like that.

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You know what happened then, Herr Medical Councilor. One evening when I went to her villa I rang in vain. She was gone and her villa was empty. I set the police and detectives in motion and ran around like a fool all day long. I did ridiculous and foolish things, but I assure you, Herr Medical Counselor, all of that can be accounted for as a person in love whose beauty has vanished suddenly as if by a stroke of magic.

My fraternity brothers were concerned about me, more than I wanted. They were the ones that telegraphed my parents. Then came the outburst of anger, which you call a catastrophe, and yet can be so easily explained. My friends, who wouldn’t leave me alone for even a minute after my antics, noticed that I was always watching for the mailman. And when the letter came, her letter, they took it away from him down on the street.

Today I know very well that they were led by good intentions, that they wanted to keep me from getting newly excited. But in that moment, as I looked out from the window everything became red before my eyes. To me

it seemed a desecration that their hands would touch her letter; that their eyes would read the lines that she had written. I tore the sharp polished fencing foil from the wall and hurried down onto the street. I called out to them to give me my letter. When they refused I hit the one that was holding the letter in the face with my weapon. The blood spurted and spotted the letter which I tore from him. I ran up to my room, bolted myself in and read the lines. She wrote:

"If you love me, bring it to an end—Oh, I will come, will come to you, my love! I will rest in your cool shade and tell you sweet tales.

Alcina"

* *

*

Now I am finished Herr Medical Councilor. I was brought here through trickery, but now I thank the fates that led me here. My agitation is gone and in this tranquility I have once more found my own peace. *I sit in the sweet fragrance that exudes from me*, and feel, know, that I am bringing it to an end. Already writing is difficult for me, Herr Medical Councilor. My fingers no longer want to stay together. They are spreading out, stretching in all directions *like a branch*.

You institution lies in a wide majestic park. I am going to walk around in it this morning. It is so large and so beautiful. I know, Herr Medical Councilor, that my words have convinced you. Oh, they have done that!

When the hour comes that is so near you will not attempt to hinder the fulfillment of my transformation. I will stand there at the back of the great meadow where the waterfall splashes. I know you will take care of me, Herr Medical Councilor. The gardener on Bonner Talweg understands about orange trees and he will give you advice. Then I will not become stunted, I will grow and bloom and my splendor will bring you joy.

She will write, Herr Medical Councilor. Then you will know her address.

And one more thing, each summer when my crown glitters with thousands of golden fruit, pick the most beautiful ones and place them in a basket. Then send them to her.

Put a little note in it with these sweet words that I heard one time on the streets of Granada:

"My love, take the blood orange,
That I picked in the quiet garden.
My love, take the blood orange!
—But don't cut it with a knife,
Or you will cut through my heart,
Which is in the middle of the blood orange!"

Of Geese, Spirits, Leeches and the Cat Organ

Oh yes, Castle Woyland! Once it was a gloomy stronghold with a moat around it deep in the dark wild forests. There was a drawbridge and a mighty gate that had once held many family crests upon it. They were the old families and when they died out another family member, another next of kin, took possession.

The lost bloodlines included the Schonenveldt's, the Eulenburg's, the Zulnhart's, the Wickede's, the Bronkhardt's, the Croy's and the Spaen's. Then there were no more male heirs to the land.

In the seventeenth century the red falcon of Brandenburg fluttered over the tower when a son-in-law, Frederick I, the great Elector of Brandenburg of the Holy Roman Empire, acquired Cleves, as it was then called. He helped drive the Spanish out of the land that his grandfather had inherited. The duchy of Cleves was united with the duchy of Mark and of Ravensburg.

Then he brought Louise Henrietta, the Princess of Orange and the red falcon of Brandenburg back home with him. His grandson, Frederick II became the first King of Prussia and Voltaire was there when the black Prussian eagle flew over the tower for the first time.

Frederick the Great preferred to pass his days in his summer palace at Sanssouci where the sunbeams glittered and played rather than the dark gloomy citadel. He wanted a private place where he could get away from the busy court so he sold the old moat protected castle.

Then the Woylands lived there. They renovated the castle and grounds in the baroque style as if it were an English property, a white palace like Windsor. They created a magnificent carefully groomed English park, but the moat remained. You went over the drawbridge to get into the castle. Large bronze stags lay on both sides of the drawbridge.

The wooded hills of Woyland forest extended behind the castle. The largest hill was an extinct volcano, the Katzenbuckel. Then there was the city of Sternbusch down below, a part of Cleves. The mighty and ancient King's forest extended to the west. To the east were rocks, meadows and low pastureland surrounded by water that extended back south and southeast up to the city of Kalkar. Fat farmers lived there. To the southwest were more undulating woodlands.

It was there deep in the woods where the falcons flew, where grandmother, Roberta von Woyland, Duchess of Kranenburg, ruled in her house by the Rhine.

Andrea didn't know exactly when she came to live with her grandmother. Her father died before she came into the world, she lived with her mother for only four or five years before her mother died as well. She had no memory of the time with her mother.

So she lived at Woyland with the old Lady. The old Lady was not really that old, forty-five or forty-six perhaps and there were all the servants. The little girl Andrea was always running around somewhere. No one looked after her, much less her grandmother. She grew like a weed.

The people called her “Fundvogel” like the child that had been snatched from heaven and sent wrapped in linen to bedevil old Mad Meg in the fairy tale and because she could never be found when you went looking for her. You would find her by the brook, hiding in the alders, or sleeping in the manger in the barn with the cows. After awhile no one searched for her anymore but the name “Fundvogel” stayed.

Once she went to her grandmother and asked, “What can I do?”

The Duchess had no time for the little one. She was dressed in her riding clothes with a high hat from which an ostrich feather waved. Pittje, the groom, laced his hands together; she stepped into them and swung up on her horse. She was riding to Reiherbeiz with her falcon.

She cried laughingly down from the saddle, “What can you do? Go, take care of the geese!”

The little one ran straight to the stables.

“What do you want Fundvogel?” The Swiss stable boy asked.

“I want the geese,” she declared. “And you must give them to me!”

He didn’t want to but the little girl was so adamant about it that he talked to the others. It didn’t matter. He had to give her the animals, the Duchess, herself, had said it. So the Swiss lad cut her a long willow switch from a branch that was hanging overhead. He trimmed the leaves and gave it to her.

She drove the geese, thirty-six large birds and eleven goslings, over the castle grounds up to the moat by the drawbridge or down through the park into the meadow. She cared for the geese every day. She carried her butter bread in a pouch that hung around her neck. Every day when the sun was high in the sky she would eat it. In the evening when she came home the first thing she would do was run to the stables for some fresh milk. She was only five years old and ran around barefoot.

Grandmother laughed.

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Once on a late summer afternoon she was sleeping under the willows near the dark gloomy brook that her geese were swimming in. The old gander was keeping watch, she called him Philipp. He was her good friend and she shared her noon bread with him.

She awoke frightened when a hot breath hit her in the face. When she opened her eyes a giant head was looming over her, it was brown and white underneath with a powerful mouth full of yellow teeth. Warm slobber dripped onto her face.

She screamed loudly, gripped the yielding nostrils with both hands and clawed tightly in her terror. The old nag threw her head back ripping the girl high off the ground. She let go, sprang back and hid behind the trunk of a willow tree to save herself.

“Philipp!” She howled. “Philipp!”

With outstretched wings, raging hisses, honking and spitting the gander climbed out of the water and attacked the leg of the horse. In a moment all the geese were there, flying out of the water and up the slope. The young ones attacked with their bills and held on flapping their wings. The older ones beat the horse with their heavy wings, cackling, crackling and ratcheting.

The horse shied, tried to jump high out of the quarrel and sprang to the side. The rider lost his stirrups and had all kinds of trouble trying to stay in

the saddle.

But then the storm broke just as quickly as it had started. The gander was clever, he recognized the horse. Oh yes, it was old Lene whom he had gotten along well with for years. He had many times slept on the straw in her stall when he was tired of the foolishness of the geese folk!

Instantly he pushed with his wings and hissed loudly for the others to hear and then stretched his neck over the mare's feet, almost caressing them. Immediately the noise of the excited geese died away. It was deeply peaceful as if nothing had happened. Only the young geese still flew around but he hunted them down and drove them back into the brook.

"Come out from behind your tree," cried a light voice.

On top of old Lene sat a blond youth only six years older than her, but he seemed much larger.

"Are you Fundvogel?" he asked.

"Yes," she whispered.

"I am your cousin Jan," he said. "I'm here at Woyland for the Holidays. Grandmother said I was supposed to bring you home."

"No," said the little girl. "I must take care of the geese. I will come home in the evening."

"It's already evening!" the youth cried. "Look around you some more barefoot!"

She looked around and saw how low the sun was in the sky. Had she been sleeping that long? She gave the boy her willow switch and tried to get up on the horse but it was not easy. She tried climbing on the mare's forelegs while holding onto the mane. The good-natured mare turned her head to look at the girl.

She slid down a couple of times but didn't give up. She kept trying. Finally she was hanging with her right hand on the stirrup and the left on

the mane. The youth bent over, grabbed and pulled her the rest of the way up. At last she sat astride the horse in the saddle in front of him, panting and very out of breath.

She was glad she had made it to the top. The boy was also glad and the old mare didn't mind. No other mare would have taken such abuse.

They rode very slowly taking the leisurely strides that old Lene loved. The goose girl sighed. It was not easy to drive geese when you were so high in the air. They always tried to go the wrong way when she was not watching. But Philipp helped, wanting to prove to old Lene that he was in charge of his flock of geese.

When they reached the stable the youth reached into his pocket and took out a piece of sugar. The girl took it. She had no fear of the large animal at all and shoved her entire hand deep into the mare's mouth.

Lene shook her head in disapproval. She couldn't eat sugar that way and she was certainly not a willow tree for children to clamber around on!

Jan showed the girl how to do it, how to lay the sugar on the open palm of the hand so the mare could take it with her lips.

Outside in the yard Philipp was walking around. He never went to bed with the other geese folk. The gray cat went by, a mouse in its mouth. Immediately Philipp was there, pretending to be very furious, very frightening. The cat let the little mouse fall. Snap! The gander had it in its beak and gulped it down. He saw no reason why only cats should eat mice.

Jan pointed his finger at her, "Go! Look how dirty you are! You need to wash your neck too. Who looks after you?"

"Katherine," said Fundvogel.

The youth raised his voice and screamed across the yard, "Katherine! Katherine!"

The large flaxen haired maid came up to them in hurried strides but it wasn't fast enough for the boy.

"Run," he cried to her. "Run, you lazy Katherine! Lift your skirts and run when I call!"

The rascal pointed at the girl.

"Take her with you, Katherine," he commanded. "Get her ready. Grandmother said she will be eating at the table with us tonight. Look at her neck, it hasn't been washed for three weeks. You better take care of this child for me, hands, feet, everything! Do you hear me Katherine?"

"Yes, young Sir," answered the maid.

Jan left and went straight to the castle. They both stared after him with open mouths and wide open eyes.

"Come Fundvogel," said Katherine and grabbed her little hand.

The barefoot girl tugged and pulled at her hand until she was free.

"No, I don't like it," she yelled. "I won't do it and I don't like it. You shouldn't lead me by the hand. I can go by myself."

Would Katherine lead her cousin Jan by the hand? She would not dare! Young Sir is what the maid had called him!

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She sat in the great hall that night, the three of them were alone at the long table. Grandmother sat at the head of the table. Further down and on the other side sat the youth. She sat across from him and even further down.

She was washed very clean; it had cost many tears and heated arguments with Katherine. Her hair was parted down the middle and braided in little pink-banded plaits. They were so tightly braided that they stood out like little pigtails. She wore a light green dress that was freshly starched and ironed. It scratched her neck. On her feet were white stockings that were pressed into black shoes.

Grandmother laughed.

The little one sat on one of the big chairs with her nose barely peeping over the edge of the table. The tall butler, Klaus, waited on them with white cotton gloves pulled over his powerful paws. He compassionately pushed a pair of pillows underneath her to lift her up.

He wanted to cut her meat too but Grandmother said, “Leave her, Klaus. She should do it by herself.”

She was hungry and ready for everything that he put on her plate but something was missing. Nothing tasted right that evening, not without her milk. It was better in the barn.

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The youth told her, “Grandmother said I should give the blessing.”

Fundvogel nodded and waited. The two sat in a thicket high up on the Katzenbuckel. He didn’t know what to say. Finally he asked her.

“Can you pray?”

She nodded again, she could do that. Someone had taught her long ago, yes, her mother. But now she had forgotten.

He considered, but couldn't think of anything appropriate.

"As far as I'm concerned we don't need to pray," he told her. "I don't do it anymore."

Then she asked if he knew any fairytales. He told her they were silly but he stammered and painfully told her some, inventing parts that he didn't know.

Once he broke off a red and white striped Field Bindweed flower.

"What does it look like?" he asked her.

"Like a glass," said the little girl. "Maybe the elves drink out of it, or the dwarves."

"Maybe," he said. "But I have never heard of it. It is Our Lady's Little Glass and Our Lady drinks out of it. Sometimes she goes for a walk and gets very thirsty. When you meet her and give her some water out of one of these she will be very happy and grant you a wish."

"I would wish that the geese don't run so far away," the little girl said.

The youth laughed, "She would be happy to do that. But you know Fundvogel; you shouldn't be with the geese so much. Maybe they are little girls like you that have been enchanted."

Andrea thought about it.

"But not Philipp," she decided.

"No, not him," agreed Jan. "He's much to clever for that."

Or else they played Piff-Paff-Poultrie. She caught onto the game easily the first time they played.

"Good day Uncle Lecketeller," said the youth with a deep bow. "I am Piff-Paff-Poultrie. Can I marry your daughter?"

"Thank you very much, Piff-Paff-Poultrie," answered Fundvogel very seriously. If mother Schmutzeschuh, brother Huschefusch, sister Käsebraut and the pretty Katrina herself all agree, then you can marry her."

“Where is mother Schmutzeschuh?” he asked.

“She is in the barn milking the cow!” she informed him in a singsong voice.

So Piff-Paff-Poultrie took his proposal to mother Schmutzeschuh and she sent him along to brother Huschefusch who was in the willow bushes. He was then sent to sister Käsebraut who was in the potato patch. Piff-Paff-Poultrie went to all of them and made his proposal and then finally came to the pretty Katrina herself.

“Good day pretty Katrina,” Jan greeted her.

“Thank you very much Piff-Paff-Poultrie,” curtsied the child Andrea.

Then he asked if she would marry him, everyone else had consented, Uncle Leckteller in the coal bin, Mother Schmutzeschuh by the colored cow, brother Huschefusch in the willow bushes and sister Käsebraut in the potato patch.

Katrina knew then that everything was all right but she still wanted to know what he did for a living.

“Are you a brush binder?” she asked.

“No, they have too many children!”

“A clothes cutter?”

“They are always hungry!”

“Farmhand?”

“That is certainly not right!”

“Chimney Sweep?”

“A filthy job!”

Finally Jan explained that he was a drummer and smoked a long pipe.

“Piff-Paff-Poultrie!”

He needed to know what he would be receiving from her as a dowry.

“I have a gold quarter,” replied Katrina.

“And thirty pennies owed!” Piff-Paff-Poultrie sang.
But then she out trumped him.

“A thimble full of wine,
A cherished old plaster stone
Of a gnome she had found,
A hand full of pretzels
An old cat
A dead sparrow
A little reed basket
Filled full of lentils”

That decided him. They were excellently suited to each other and could put the lentils to very good use at the wedding. They sang together and he beat the drum keeping time.

“Lentils, they are the thing,
Pop them in the oven
Bake and for six weeks
They stay hard as a bone!”

It was all set; they could get married in seven weeks. All the geese would be invited to the celebration and the goslings would be the bridesmaids. The gander Philipp would stand as godfather with his godchild as if she were his own. She wanted to call Jan, Piff-Paff-Poultrie, and she could be called Katrina or perhaps even Fundvogel. She hadn’t decided yet.

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They came back to Woyland as the evening sun was shining into the castle courtyard. Jan and the little girl Andrea came running in from the meadow laughing and holding hands. She took his hand gladly. It was entirely different than holding Katherine's red lugs.

The youth suddenly put his hand over her mouth.

"Shh! Shh! Be quiet Fundvogel!"

He pulled her with him under grandmother's window. Music rang out from it. They stood still and listened, not moving a finger.

"She is playing Bach," said her cousin.

The little girl nodded. She didn't understand, believed that grandmother was playing the brook, the dark brook, where her geese swam, the noise they made and their chatter. That is what she thought grandmother was playing on the organ.

But the youth said, "It is the 'Partita'. That means farewell and goodbye. 'Partire' is Latin for depart! I recognize it Fundvogel. She is playing it because my time is almost up, because I must soon leave Woyland."

The little girl nodded. "Yes," she said. "That is why she is playing it."

She held his hand tightly. They stood together in the evening sun of the quiet courtyard of Woyland, listening, listening.

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On the next holiday Jan tried to give her swimming lessons. He had blue swimming trunks and commanded Katherine to make her a pair as well. Katherine made her a swimsuit out of an old red and yellow polka dotted blouse but it was so huge that you could fit two Andrea's into it, one in each leg.

That didn't matter, Katherine thought. She would grow into it. In the meantime, she needed to go without a swimsuit.

Andrea was afraid and wouldn't go any deeper into the water than up to her ankles. The youth pushed and pulled at her but couldn't bring her in any further than up to her knees before she tore herself free and ran out of the water screaming.

He splashed her and scolded her saying that she was dumb as a potato or a cucumber, she could take her pick. She should be ashamed of herself in front of the little goslings. They could swim as soon as they were hatched.

She was ashamed but that didn't help much. It went on like that for almost a week before she dared venture back into the water at the brook. That remained the high point. Any further attempts to show her the movements were useless.

One day he explained that he wanted to catch leeches with her. It was something different that they hadn't done yet. He knew of a putrid brown pond that was full of them. He led her there and had her go in only a little way, then a little more. He stayed quietly on the bank and watched.

She felt no pain and stood there in the dirty water cooking in the hot sun. The water was wonderfully warm so she got up her courage and went deeper into it until only her head peeked out.

He told her that she needed to stand very still and to keep her occupied suggested they play Piff-Paff-Poultrie. She was always ready to play that and they played it together three times, one after the other. The little girl was so into the game that she didn't notice at all when the things bit her.

Finally he decided it had been long enough and she could come out. She came all right but how she came! The yellow and brown muck ran down off her and she was covered with leeches. Her horrified eyes opened wide, staring so hard she couldn't even scream.

The cousin applauded in amusement, laughed in delight, praised her very highly and said there was no better bait for leeches in the entire world than Fundvogel! That calmed her down. He told her it didn't matter how dirty she was because she only needed to run back over to the brook where her clothes were laying. She could wash herself clean there and they would take the leeches off. They would be rich; such nice leeches would certainly bring good money!

If only he had a can or cardboard box to put them in! He didn't have anything except his own swimsuit. He took it off, pulled the waist string out and tied off the legs making a sack that he could put the beauties in.

Now it was time to pluck the dainty grape like things off, first the large fat swollen ones hanging in the middle of her belly. He broke off a small willow tree branch and tried to scrape them off. It didn't work. He didn't like touching the disgusting things with his fingers.

The leech thought nothing of the stick, didn't let go. It sucked and sucked, nothing had tasted so good in its entire life!

Andrea watched, her face growing longer and longer all the time. Silent tears came into her gray eyes, ran down her back.

Jan threw the stick away, got up his courage, grabbed the leech with three fingers and pulled but the animal would not let go. It hurt and Andrea screamed.

“Wait,” he cried. “I will pull it loose!”

He grabbed onto it very hard with his entire hand and ripped it off. Blood was instantly streaming. He was terrified. The strain was too much for the little girl and she lost it screaming convulsively, howling wildly and bellowing.

“Be quiet Fundvogel!”

He admonished. But it didn’t go well for him. Desperately he ripped two more leeches off her left leg. The blood streamed brightly, mixing its red in with the brown and yellow muck. She looked like an Indian, he thought. An Indian on the warpath and she bellowed like one too!

Then Philipp tore up to them. Oh yes, Philipp knew very well how she screamed when she was in danger. The little girl saw him storming to her rescue like a vengeful bronze angel.

“Philipp,” she lamented. “Oh Philipp!”

The gander was right by her now, he hissed at the youth. Was he the enemy? Then he hesitated, flapped his wings, bowed his neck, eyed her and sniffed. Leeches? He despaired of ever understanding these human folk. Is that why she was screaming and yelling? He would take care of that right away. His bill shot out like lighting, then back, then out again. In no time he had caught and swallowed two of them.

Only, the hard pecking of a gander’s bill, even when well intentioned, is not very pleasant for a five year old dog-naked girl. She ran off screaming to high heaven, running through the meadow with Philipp and his flock in pursuit.

The youth stood there with a dumb look on his face not knowing what to do. Then he ran after them. Dear God, that powerful gander would peck the little thing to death! Now he was screaming too.

The chase went through the park, over the drawbridge and right up to the castle door screaming, honking and making noise. All the servants ran out to them. Grandmother stood there by her horse. She had just come back from her ride. The poor hunted naked thing ran straight into her arms.

“Now what’s going on?” she asked.

“Leeches,” howled the little girl.

The Duchess looked at the mess.

“Take her with you,” she commanded Katherine. “Carefully put salt on the leeches to get rid of them. Then wash the child and put her to bed.”

She turned around to the naked youth.

“You have some explaining to do!”

He obeyed, gasping for breath.

“I had Fundvogel go naked into the pond as bait for leeches. She was very good at it and caught a lot of them, but it is really hard to rip them off. It bleeds.”

Grandmother laughed. Then she grabbed him by the hair and dragged him with over to the bronze stags by the drawbridge. She raised him high and laid him over one of them. Then she swung the riding whip to her heart’s content.

The youth knew that if he cried out it would be double so he bit his lip instead until it bled. He saw green and yellow spots before his eyes, would she never stop?

She pulled him down from the stag, stood him up, shook him by the shoulders.

“Do you know why you just got a thrashing?” she asked.

He pulled himself together.

“Yes,” he said. “Because I used Fundvogel as bait for leeches.”

“No,” said grandmother. “That’s not why at all! It’s because you didn’t know that you needed salt to get them loose!”

She waved old Griet over.

“Take the young gentleman to bed. He can’t very well sit at the table tonight. He doesn’t get any supper either.”

The limping maid wanted to put in a good word, “Duchess…”

Grandmother interrupted her, “Quiet Griet! Give the young gentleman a glass of water and nothing else.”

The limping old maid took him by the arm and led him to his room, took some oil and rubbed it over his welts and laid him in bed. He had to lay on his belly cramming his fingers into the pillow and biting it with his teeth. There was no place on his backside that didn’t hurt. There were stripes from his neck down to the hollows of his knees. He moaned and sobbed from the pain.

Then he slept.

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That night he dreamed that his bedroom door opened. No, no, it wasn’t a dream. The door creaked so loudly that it woke him up. He raised his head, looked around, the light of the full moon shone through the huge window. The door really was open; the little girl came in. She looked

dreadfully pale; he was frightened, almost believed she was dead. She wore a long nightgown; her hair had fallen down around her shoulders.

“Fundvogel?” the youth whispered.

She came up to the side of his bed and took his hand.

“Does it still hurt?” she whispered.

He said, “No, not at all!”

Then he made an awkward movement and groaned. She put her little hand on his red-hot forehead, caressing it tenderly.

“Are you mad at me Jan?” she asked.

“Why should I be mad at you?” he came back.

“Because grandmother gave you a thrashing,” she said.

He shook his head, “No, that doesn’t matter at all. I scarcely feel it.”

Then he saw how she staggered, almost fell down, grabbed his arm to steady herself.

“You are so pale!” he said. “You are so pale and very cold. You’ve certainly lost a lot of blood.”

“A little bit,” she agreed. “But it doesn’t matter. If you want, we can go catch leeches again tomorrow. I won’t scream any more.”

“No, no,” he said. “I don’t know what I want to do yet.”

She raised up on tiptoes, rubbed her cheek against his.

“Good night,” she whispered. “I must go before Katherine notices.”

She sneaked out lightly on her bare feet. That’s when he saw how weak she really was as she staggered through the door.

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He didn't see his little cousin any more that holiday. She was very weak, caught a fever, and they needed to call the doctor. She had to stay in bed for twelve days and Jan was not permitted to see her. In the meantime his holiday ended.

Katherine had put the leeches in a bottle; she thought she could sell them in Kleve. They were worth a lot of money. Jan wanted them, claimed they were his, that they belonged to him. Katherine claimed they belonged to her because she had removed them. They agreed to share the proceeds between the two of them.

Jan was resolved to buy something for his sick cousin with his half of the money. He had Pittje saddle up old Lene so he could ride into town. The Elephant Pharmacy didn't want the leeches, thought they had enough in stock already. The Unicorn Pharmacy offered him only five pennies a piece, but the Lion Pharmacy, the one at St. Anthony's hospital, said they would pay ten pennies each if Jan would buy something from the store. Jan bargained, said he needed half in cash to bring back to Katherine. The Lion Pharmacist agreed. He counted them out, there were forty-nine but one was apparently dead. Four of them were horseleeches, he couldn't use them. So he gave Jan two Marks and twenty pennies for Katherine. Jan bought candy with his share, licorice, licorice and more licorice. That would make Fundvogel very happy.

But it's a long way from Kleve back to Woyland, especially when you are riding old Lene. First, he just wanted to see how it tasted. He sucked, chewed and sucked some more. It was all gone long before he was back. He consoled himself by thinking the sick girl would probably not have been allowed to eat the candy anyway.

He gave Katherine the money, asked her if she would like to go out and catch some more leeches with him. She was three times the size of Fundvogel, thick and fat. They would certainly bite on her. Katherine didn't want to so he thought about who else he might use as bait. He would gladly use grandmother but didn't dare ask her. Then he thought of old Lene but that wouldn't work either so he gave up on catching any more leeches.

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The leeches were long forgotten the next year when Jan came back for the summer holiday. He couldn't ride old Lene anymore. She had been retired, permitted to run free and do whatever she wanted.

A heartfelt friendship grew between him and the old gander, Philipp, who had been independent for a long time now as well. They often walked through the meadow together. The goslings had grown up and new ones were hatched but the old ones were still there as well. Fundvogel had seen to that. She had thrown a fit when they were supposed to be slaughtered for St. Martin's day.

She had ran to grandmother, told her that they were her geese and besides, it was quite possible that they were really little girls that had been enchanted into the bodies of geese. Grandmother had agreed, decided that all the geese should live. That year they bought the St. Martin's day birds from a nearby farmer.

Jan wanted a Welsh pony and the Duchess presented him with one so they could both learn how to ride. Its name was Hobgoblin, but everyone

called it Goblin. Pittje, the groom, said it had a devil in it. It bit or kicked as soon as you tried putting a blanket or saddle on its back. He explained that they needed to bite back. Then he bit Goblin on the ears, first the right and then the left. That way the pony learned what happened to him when he bit someone.

They needed to learn how to saddle the pony and even before that Andrea needed to learn how to bite back. For two days she practiced biting hard into a leather strap and into fabric. Jan led her around with the strap, pulling her and she was not allowed to let go. Finally she tried her new skill on Goblin. The youth bit him on the right ear and Fundvogel on the left, bit so hard the pony couldn't shake them loose. Then they got the snaffle bit into his mouth and buckled the bridle on before he could spit it out.

Goblin patiently let the little girl climb up on his back. He understood perfectly, was standing quietly one moment, then raised up on his forelegs and with a bound onto his back legs giving a little buck. Fundvogel crawled out of the manure pile.

Again and again she climbed up, again and again Goblin threw her off. She was finally beaten and crept away black and blue. That day the pony had won. Now Pittje joined in the work. Jan climbed up and the groom put a line on the pony and let it run around the corral in a big circle while he cracked the whip around its ears. Goblin saw that it was better to stand nicely for the little girl than to be oppressed by the two rascals.

By the next day he had already forgotten and the dance began all over again. It went like that for a week until Goblin was tame and stood quietly for the little girl. Meanwhile, she had more bruises on her body than hairs on her head.

Grandmother was away on a trip and Jan intended that his cousin be riding before her return. Afternoons he took her for swimming lessons. The

yellow suit with red polka dots still didn't fit and Fundvogel needed to go naked as she had last year. But Jan thought she looked fully clothed with all her colorful bruises, they were a rich rainbow of colors.

He had gotten a couple of pig bladders from the swineherd, inflated and tied them around her. Andrea was still afraid, but didn't make a big scene that year. The Duchess, Roberta, came back but didn't stay the night. She rode quickly on to the house in the forest, to her hunting lodge, where her falcons were kept.

Jan had ten more days to work with Fundvogel. Finally the day of the great performance came. He took grandmother down to the gloomy brook where Andrea needed to prove that she could swim, first with and then without the pig bladders. She wasn't very fast, but she swam from one bank to the other side and then back again.

That evening Fundvogel sat astride Goblin in the corral as Jan ran the animal on the line letting his whip crack. Andrea crouched like a trained monkey on top of the pony. You could scarcely call it riding but she stayed on and didn't fall off. She jumped over three hurdles. Jan explained that she had lots of talent; he would train her to become a circus performer. He also wanted to put up a tightrope between two of the castle towers, and then she could be a tightrope walker too!

Grandmother was very satisfied that evening. She commanded that from now on Fundvogel should be called "Young Miss". None of the servants bothered, they still called her Fundvogel, at least when the Duchess was not around.

The little girl didn't care, only Katherine needed to call her "Young Miss" and she argued herself green over it.

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When Jan came for the Easter Holiday he declared that they needed to build a cat organ. Other people had tried but never been successful and the great idea had almost been forgotten. If they could do it, it would be a magnificent work of art and they could travel through the world with it and make lots of money.

Pittje, the groom, gave them sacks and the housemaster, long Klaus Schiettekatte, gave them Valerian to use as bait. Then Jan built a trap. No cat from the surrounding neighborhood farms was safe. Every morning a few more were caught in the Valerian baited trap.

“Look Fundvogel, see how eager they are,” laughed the cousin. “They all want to perform in the Cat organ!”

He ran to grandmother, asked her if she would play the *Largo* for them and write it down.

“What will you do with it then?” the Duchess asked. “And what does a dumb boy like you know about Handel?”

Jan said that he heard the music being played once on an organ at a church concert. But it was a secret; he wanted it to be a surprise for her. So she sat down at the grand piano and played the opening theme of *Largo* for the children. The boy wanted all the notes written down and under each of them a syllable -do-re-mi-fa- and so on for singing.

The Duchess tried to explain, to teach him that the *Largo* was not meant to be sung, it was especially made for the piano or the organ. But it would have been just as easy to tell him not to eat green gooseberries.

When that rascal got something into his head, he had to have it, whether it was good for him or not.

"I do need it for an organ," he cried. "For a singing organ!"

He pleaded for so long that grandmother finally shook her head, set down and wrote the syllables under the notes. Jan learned the theme on the piano, then Andrea needed to learn it too. She played it with her fingertips the best she could.

Over and over, all through the house they sang, "re-si-la-sol-sol-sol-fa-mi-re-re-mi-fa-sol-la-ri-la-sol-la-mi-mi-fa-sol-re-re-mi-mi-do-ri-si!"

Their howling echoed through the castle, finally the Duchess couldn't take it any more. It occurred to her that the Largo might have been originally created for an opera so she searched in her library, found Handel's opera *Xerxes* and wrote the lyrics out for the boy.

"What shaded green
Could be more refreshing,
Sweeter, enchanting
Than these sweet blossoms."

Jan thought "Shaded green" just wasn't right for his purpose so he changed it to:

"What lovely sounds
Could be more enchanting,
Purer, refreshing
Than this sweet meowing?"

“We must study this,” he explained to Andrea and Katherine. “The cats will still do: do-re-mi. It suits them better.”

He built a cage that stood up high on four posts. The front was wire screen but the bottom was made of wooden slats with large spaces between them. They put the cats inside of it.

Everything went very well up to that point, but then the task became very difficult. They had to thread the cat’s tails through the slats and tie strings on them. They got lots of scratches and bites; there was no spot on their hands that wasn’t torn and bloody. It seemed that the cats were not that interested in pursuing their musical education.

Finally it was ready. Fourteen beautiful cattails were pulled through the bars and provided with their own individual strings. They bandaged their hands, sat down in front of the cage and sang the Largo for the animals, re-si-la-sol-fa-mi-re, determining which cats would sing which notes.

The great performance was in the barn that afternoon. Grandmother had the place of honor. She had to pay a ten Mark entrance fee. Behind her crowded the household; the lady’s maid, Fanny; both blond bumpkins, Katherine and her sister; the milkmaid, Stine; the limping old Griet; Pittje; Klaus and all the others.

Jan stood at the door. It cost five pennies to get inside. Everyone got a beautiful program that Katherine had copied until her fingers were sore.

!!!Today Only!!!

!!!For the First Time in the World!!!

Premiere Presentation of the Illustrious

Cat Organ

Personally performed

By

Jan

With assistance from Jupp, Fundvogel and Katherine

The Largo

By

G.J. Handel
(from the opera Xerxes)

Performing artists:

Tenors: Cats; Scratcher, Ratter, Mouser & Howler

Baritones: Cats; Slinker, Prankster & Stone Wetter

Bass: Cats; Lightfoot, Lizard Catcher & Floor Prowler

Sopranos: Cats; Sparrow Snapper, Miez & Mantz

Alto: Cat; Sour Milk

Jan and Andrea stepped in front of a large sackcloth curtain, with them Katherine and old Jupp. Jupp played his harmonica as the others sang:

"Is any gentle sound
More delightful
Purer and refreshing
Than sweet Meowing?
Tones so sweet
You can joyfully
Wander the earth to find
It's paradise
It's paradise!"

With a lot of imagination and good will you could recognize the melody of the *Largo*. But the following number was much easier to understand and recognize as they sang accompanied by the harmonica.

"Pull their tails!
Pull, but don't pull them off!
Leave a little stump
So they can still dance!"

The singers fell back. Jan stepped up and explained that he personally would now present to the gentle public Handel's renowned *Largo* performed for the first time ever on the Cat Organ.

He pushed the curtains back. You could see the cage hidden by a large sackcloth that hung down to the floor. Jan and Andrea crawled under it. He operated the eleven tomcats; Andrea took the three females. They pulled to their hearts content and the concert began.

Sadly the magnificent concert didn't last very long. Grandmother sprang up, tore the sackcloth away from the cage and saw everything. Saw her grandchildren playing the beautiful Cat Organ with high enthusiasm, pulling the strings with vigor and pleasure in close association with the four footed singers.

They hissed, bit and scratched each other, meowing dreadfully, especially the one-eyed cat, Sour Milk, whose contralto sounded prominently through the other surrounding beautiful voices. It mingled harmoniously with the tenor of the raven black Mouser.

The concert was broken up, much to the regret of the public, the cooks and stable hands that were enjoying it very much. The Duchess made the organizer bring her the riding whip, but it was more on general principle, she was not really angry and didn't feel sorry for the cats at all. This time the punishment was very mild.

Later the children went to old Jupp in the horse stables. He gave them some milk, and then they split the money with him.

"We are martyrs of art!" Jan declared.

He rubbed his sore bottom, that was all he got. But Andrea had gotten a nasty bite from the Soprano, Meiz, on her left hand. It had festered and swollen up. Jupp tried to treat it. First he sucked the wound out, then put a mixture of old chewing tobacco and horse manure on it as a poultice. That made it much worse.

When grandmother saw it she had the team hitched up and took her to the doctor in Kleve. There the flesh was cut away and cleaned up. It took

four weeks to heal.

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That was the year Kotts suddenly appeared. He stayed for almost four years at Woyland. Kotts was a spirit and it was lucky that he was only active during the day and slept nights otherwise Katherine would have been long gone from Woyland. She suffered the most from him.

One beautiful day Katherine was washing Funvogel's neck. Fundvogel shouted at Katherine to be careful, couldn't she see Kotts standing there? Katherine looked and looked but didn't see anything.

In the beginning Kotts only tormented Katherine. Andrea had placed a plate of cherries on a footstool and Katherine went to pick them up. The girl called out to her that she better not take Kotts' meal away. The footstool belonged to Kotts. Sometimes Andrea would put a cup of water there, a piece of soap and a washcloth so he could wash up. The water stayed the way it was but Andrea said that Kotts was so clean he didn't get the water dirty.

Katherine didn't like it at all, spoke to all the other maids about it. They all laughed at her. Later they didn't laugh any more. Kotts became independent and ventured outside of Andrea's room.

Once at suppertime she led Klaus around as he waited on the table. She didn't want him to run Kotts over. The Duchess, whom old Griet had told about the spirit, asked how tall he was.

"This high," pointed Andrea. "He reaches up to my knee."

“And he is called Kotts?” Grandmother asked again. “And you can see him clearly?”

“Yes, Kotts!” Andrea nodded. “Can’t you see him?”

Jan bent over the table, “Yes, there he is.”

He laughed, “He looks a little foggy.”

Grandmother said, “When you bring Kotts to the table you must also give him something to eat.”

Fundvogel took a desert plate, put some mashed potatoes on it, stuck a pickle in it, then set it on the floor.

“That’s his favorite food,” she explained.

Klaus, the HouseMaster, made a funny face.

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Andrea gave Kotts riding lessons. Pittje had to take the pony around on the lead rope.

“Don’t slouch so much Kotts,” she cried. “You must sit up straight! Press your legs tight against the body! Don’t bounce, do you hear? Don’t bounce!”

She turned to the groom, “Pittje, be more careful! You almost hit Kotts with your stupid whip!”

Pittje was very happy when the riding lesson was over, it was not fun to teach an invisible rider.

In the evenings the old coachman sat on the bench in front of the stables smoking his pipe. Andrea came by, cried out at him:

“Move over Jupp, you are sitting on Kotts!”

The elder looked at her, shook his head, spit on the ground. Then he said slow and deliberate, “Fundvogel is crazy!”

He took a couple of strong pulls but his pipe didn’t taste right anymore. He looked to the side next to him. Was something really sitting next to him on the bench? He stood up, went across the yard looking for another place to sit.

It went that way for some time. Andrea would forget about Kotts for awhile and there would be peace at Woyland.

But every time Jan would come to visit he would always enquire, “How are things with Kotts?”

“Thank you for asking,” said Andrea. “He has the sniffles and had somewhat of a bad night.”

“Give him some malt candy!” her cousin cried.

Soon Kotts began to play various little pranks. Jan had been given horse dust from the coachman at Easter and he gave it to Andrea. That was the stuff you scratched off when you curried the horse. Katherine had found this filthy thing in her bed mixed with hedgehog hairs. She woke up in the middle of the night with such itching all over her body that she thought she would go crazy! She scratched herself bloody but it was useless. She ran to the Duchess the next morning to complain. The Duchess asked who had done it.

“The Young Miss said,” howled the large maid, “that it was Kotts. I would love to wring that fellow’s neck!”

“Then do it,” laughed the Duchess, Roberta. “You have my permission.”

But it didn’t always go so well for Kotts. A beautiful vase was broken and the suspicion fell on Andrea.

“Did you do it?” Grandmother asked.

“No,” said the little girl. “I didn’t do it. Kotts did it.”

“Now look,” cried Grandmother. “That deserves punishment, don’t you agree?”

The girl nodded and instantly her face burned from a resounding box on the ear.

“Give that to Kotts,” laughed Grandmother. “And greet him for me.”

Nevertheless the relationship between Kotts and Andrea continued to be very close. She would sit for hours on the floor conversing with him, telling him fairy tales and playing Piff-Paff-Poultrie. She was the drummer boy and Kotts was the beautiful Katrina. When it rained she went outside with him and came back soaking wet because she had held the umbrella over Kotts. She brought him earthworms, caterpillars and grubs, once she even brought him a fat maggot because he was such an animal lover.

Still, it is sad to say that Kotts came to an inglorious end because Katherine married and went back to Kalkar. Then a new nanny called Petronella came to care for Andrea. The people called her Nellie, which in Kleves was another way of saying Petronella.

Right on the first day they were arguing. Nellie refused to call Andrea “Young Miss” and forbid Andrea to call her “Nellie”. She had come too far just to endure that!

Too far! She came—she came from the house in the forest, the Duchess’ hunting lodge, where her father took care of the falcons. Grandmother was called; she suggested they mutually address each other as equals. Fundvogel was enraged. Hadn’t she called Katherine, Katrina and Elizabeth?

In conclusion they both half agreed, Andrea would continue to be called Miss but without the “Young” or “Little” since she was now ten years

old. In return she would be obliged to call Nellie by her beautiful proper name, Petronella. Scarcely was this peace established before a new war broke out in which Kotts played an important role on Andrea's side.

Namely both girls had absolutely different ideas over Petronella's position and duties. Andrea desired her as a true Lady's maid that would help her dress and undress, keep her things in order and always be there if she was needed—like a nimble chamber maid. Like Fanny was for her grandmother.

The flaxen haired Katherine, the large lazy bumpkin, had not been suited for that at all but Petronella, brown eyed, brown haired, slim, graceful, quick and intelligent would be excellent. She would only need a little training thought Andrea.

Petronella had an entirely different view. She had spent a few years in the Heart of Jesus Cloister, had been brought up properly and was also self-taught in many skills! She could honestly read, write, do sums, knew the catechism by heart and even did needlework for everyone ten miles around.

These were all things Andrea was very weak at. Read, yes she could read. Her cousin had brought his books with and she had quickly learned because she enjoyed it. But her writing was very bad. She could scarcely write her name legibly with great difficulty. As for sums, she had never gotten past one plus one. She didn't know a word of the catechism. In regards to sewing, she couldn't tell a crochet needle from a sewing needle.

Petronella said that she should be ashamed of herself. That didn't set well with Andrea at all. Could the educated creature, Petronella, ride? She was welcome to go along with to the stables, catch the pony and saddle it. Then she could prove her worth! Could she swim? Pah, she couldn't even tend the geese! That shamed Petronella and shut her up. There were no geese at the house in the forest.

Andrea grandly declared that she would gladly learn the catechism if Petronella would in return learn how to tend the geese. But if she could ride Goblin through the yard, then she would take lessons in darning socks.

Petronella took her on. It would really be something if she couldn't learn what this little stuck up kid could learn! Very early the next day Andrea woke Petronella up. She hung a sack around her neck and put bread in it explaining that it would be her noon meal. She didn't allow Petronella to put on any shoes. She had to tend geese barefoot. Then she took her along to catch the geese, informed her of where to take them and not to come back before dark.

Andrea was happy, for today at least Petronella would not torment her. Then it occurred to her that it would not be much use. Tending geese was not very difficult; she had learned it in one day when she was only five years old. She would have to learn the catechism in the morning! Wasn't there something that would make tending geese more difficult for Petronella? Suddenly she shouted with joy. Philipp! Where was Philipp? She searched around and found him in the hay by old Lene.

She called him, enticed him to go out of the stable with her. Petronella was still not out of the courtyard. She was having trouble keeping her little troop in order, which is not easy when you don't have a switch.

The maids laughed at her, but Pittje, who had fallen for the beautiful girl, took pity on her, cried out that he would bring her a switch. That was when Andrea came out from around back with the gander.

"Do you see that, Philipp?" she hissed at him exactly like he hissed at the others. She had learned how to a long time ago.

"Do you see that, she is stealing all of your geese! All of them! The goslings too! She is stealing them, stealing! Do you hear me Philipp?"

She hissed excitedly and the gander understood. He raged over the entire courtyard toward Petronella as if he were possessed. Petronella then did the dumbest thing she could have done; she hit back at him with her hand. Instantly Philipp had her arm caught, pecking at it with his large bill.

Petronella screamed loudly and ran away but the gander was faster than she was, quickly had her by the calf of the leg. Then he flew around and gripped her from the front, chased her around the courtyard. Petronella bellowed and the geese chattered. The farm hands and maids shook with laughter. It would have gone badly for her if Pittje hadn't quickly pushed her into the stable and shut the door after her.

Andrea got a big piece of bacon, cut a slice off and fed it to Philipp. Then he went alone with his flock across the pasture.

Petronella limped painfully back over the courtyard. The Duchess stood watching in the window above.

"What happened to you Nellie?" she cried.

Petronella miserably lamented her tale of grief and difficulty with the raging gander. Grandmother had seen her grandchild by the gander, feeding it and praising it for doing well. She cried out to Andrea:

"Tell me, who got Philipp to chase after Nellie?"

In her softest and most innocent voice Andrea said convincingly, "It must have been Kotts."

Grandmother laughed and warned, "Kotts shouldn't instigate so much mischief."

Then she decided over the controversy. Andrea didn't need to learn catechism or sewing but she must become fluent in sums and writing. She was to begin immediately that day.

That was when Kotts stepped in seriously and made many appearances. He sabotaged the lessons and did it so thoroughly that no day went by

without some disturbance. He always broke the tips off the pencils and writing quills, put hair, water or flies in the ink bottle, hid all the writing tablets and school books so well that you could look all day and not find them.

He also did inexcusable things to Petronella. He stretched a wire over the stairs so she tripped over it and fell hurting her leg, making it bleed. One morning her hair was so full of burrs that she had to rip out hanks of it. She found dead rats and frogs in her shoes, an old hedgehog in the foot of her bed whose quills stabbed her toes as she stretched out her legs.

"It was Kotts," Andrea declared calmly when something would happen.

It didn't work. Things still didn't go the way Andrea wished because she was blamed for Kotts' behaviors and unreasonable demands were placed on her in return.

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Then came the time when the long cucumbers grew on the manure pile. She ate them passionately and greedily. One summer morning she was out for hours riding through the fields, came back in the burning heat of the sun for her noon meal. She was so thirsty her tongue was hanging out of her mouth.

She brought her pony to the stable. Jupp and Pittje were there and offered her a beer. It was Old Kleve beer, abominable stuff, but tasted delicious to the girl. She guzzled down three full glasses, then went to the cow's stall and got a large glass of milk. She took a knife, ran to the

vegetable patch, cut up cucumbers, salted them, and ate them with her bread. She ate more and still more until she couldn't eat any more. Her noon bread had not tasted so delicious for a long time.

Unfortunately it didn't sit well, didn't sit well at all. The result was very explosive and immensely sudden. Green and pale, she ran to her room much too late. It was very bad.

Petronella picked her up, washed her and brought her to bed. Andrea felt very miserable and didn't want anyone to know what had happened. As she lay in bed she whispered:

"Please, don't tell grandmother!"

Petronella nodded, took her clothing and carried the mess out of the room.

She turned around in the doorway, called triumphantly, "What should I tell your grandmother? That Kotts did it?"

She swung the brown and green clothing like a flag. Grandmother never heard the story but everyone else did. Wherever Andrea went they giggled. When she went back to the stables Jupp, the old coachman, laughed and said just loud enough so she could hear:

"That Kotts sure can't hold his beer can he?"

Andrea flushed red-hot and without a word slumped out of the stable. That was the end of Kotts. No spirits can take such gossip, something always held over their head. That's why he disappeared from Woyland.

When Jan came for vacation and asked about Kotts, the answer she gave was so loud you could hear it both downstairs and upstairs.

"Kotts? He is too stupid for me. I chased him away!"

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Andrea was ten years old. She had been able to play chess for a long time, played the grand piano and reed organ very beautifully, had learned how from her grandmother.

Grandmother instructed her grand daughter in ice skating as well; it was the time just before Katherine left. The last winter had been a hard one and they skated for hours and entire days. Andrea learned figure skating on the castle moat. Grandmother showed her how it was done, and then she practiced. Sometimes old Jupp played the harmonica and they skated to the music.

Once some gypsies came by, three wagons full. The Duchess cleared an empty barn behind the park for them and they stayed there over the winter. They repaired all the frying pans and kettles, made baskets out of reeds and willow twigs.

There were two men that played the violin and a young woman that played the viola. Grandmother let them come up to the drawbridge in the afternoons to play. Down below on the frozen moat she skated to the waltz with her grandchild.

One evening they burned pitch in the frying pans and placed them on the drawbridge. It was a big festival for the servants, neighboring farmers and farmer's wives. There was dancing, glowing hot spiked punch, sausage and fancy deserts. Andrea was allowed to stay up until ten o'clock and Katherine was completely drunk when she brought the child to bed.

When she skated cross country Andrea needed to wear different skates, Hollander skates made out of wood with a very long thin steel keel that curved up in front like the runners on a sled.

They skated together, skated over the canal, brook and moat, then further over the flat ice flooded meadows down to the old branch of the Rhine. They went further, always further. It was as if the frozen world went on forever, willow bushes and alders and far in the distance the forest. There was an occasional windmill and always the thin snowflakes in the air. Hand in hand they skated through the still winter days. At noon they went into a nearby village, rested, sat in a warm guesthouse. Then they skated back and were home by sunset.

But St. Blaise's day of that year, the day after Maria Candlemass came, was a day Andrea would never forget. They skated far out, almost to Kranenburg. They left very early that morning, at noon they rested in a village. This time they stayed longer. The Duchess met some farmers in the pub and spoke with them about some horses she wanted to buy. The heavy workhorses were produced and she examined them very thoroughly. It took a long time and was dusk already when they left.

As they skated back the Duchess stumbled over a piece of wood that was sticking up in the ice. She fell down, screamed out, and sat there grabbing her foot. Andrea came up to her.

"What's wrong grandmother?" she asked.

The Duchess shook her head.

"Nothing," she said.

She took her handkerchief, wrapped it tightly around her ankle. Andrea could tell how much it hurt. She helped her grandmother stand back up and slowly they skated further. Time and time again grandmother needed to stop and rest. It became very dark and hard to find their way. Then the old moon came up and they could see a little further. Hours passed and then more hours.

Andrea skated up ahead, now they were skating over the gloomy brook, then she came to the high reeds on the large fishpond. She skated back; told her grandmother they were almost home. She would skate ahead and get some help, some field hands and a sleigh.

The Duchess nodded and watched her chase off, then scarcely ten steps in front of her the little girl vanished without a sound. She rubbed her hands over her eyes, believed she must be dreaming.

“Andrea,” she called. “Andrea!”

There was no answer. The Duchess ran over to the spot. There! A fishing hole four meters across was freshly cut into the ice. She, herself, had commanded that fish be caught early that morning before they left. She saw the tracks of the skates, here and there where her grand daughter had skated. Then she saw the tracks where she had fallen through the ice.

“Good God!” groaned the Duchess.

She didn’t hesitate a moment, threw off her wool jacket onto the ice, unlaced her skates, pulled them off, sprang into the dead cold water and swam. She grabbed onto the edge on the other side, took a deep breath and dived under the ice.

When she told about it later, she didn’t really know how it happened, only knew that suddenly she grabbed onto a skate, then a leg that was hanging there in the water. Then she was banging her head against the ice, pulling and tearing at it until she finally found her way out gasping for air in the freezing water.

She lifted Andrea onto the ice, tried getting out herself, slid back in, and tried again. She finally pushed the lifeless child out of the way, held onto the ice, used it like a beam, supported herself on it, lifted herself up, brought a knee up on it and threw herself forward.

She didn’t stop to breath, undressed her grandchild, rolled the wet clothing together, shoved them under the girl’s back so that her head hung back. Then she knelt down beside her, grasped her forearms and pressed with them against the girl’s chest, then raised the arms quickly back over her head.

Again and again and still again, she worked until the sweat was running on her forehead even though the clothing was freezing on her body. She didn’t stop, not for a moment, not until the little one was breathing, until she knew that her grand daughter lived!

She rubbed Andrea from head to foot, wrapped her in the dry wool coat, took her in her arms and carried her through the night. Her foot hurt so badly that she believed she would fall any minute but she bit her lip and kept walking, first over the fishpond, up the slope, then cross-country.

The moon went down, she got lost in the darkness. There were snowflakes all around, always snow flakes. At times she would call out but no one heard. She sat down to rest on a tree stump in the pasture, groaning with pain and grasping her swollen deformed foot. Then she continued, further, further, through an eternity.

She finally came to Woyland, came into the park and screamed for her people. They came with torches and lanterns. Fanny, her lady’s maid, was the first to reach her and took the child. Klaus and Pittje wound their hands together so the Duchess could sit and carried her into the castle.

Andrea only needed to stay in bed a few days with some sniffles and a little cough. That was all. St. Blaise worked quickly. No one understood colds better than he did and this was especially right for him since the accident happened on his name day. Old Griet had prayed and explained everything to him.

Sadly grandmother was denied any help from St. Blaise and they needed to call in Dr. Peerenboom, the medical doctor from Kleeve. She had severe pneumonia in both lungs. It was weeks before she was out of danger. Then the entire left side of her face and throat swelled up from a tooth infection that abscessed and spread to her eye.

Old Griet solemnly promised that she would make the pilgrimage back to Kevelaer to honor the Virgin Mary if the Duchess would soon get better. She prayed five times a day to St. Blaise for the throat, to St. Apollonia for the tooth and to St.Odulia for the eye of her Duchess.

It was bewitched; it would not get better. The Duchess lay for months. Almost a year passed before her foot was completely well and that was only because Griet prayed to St. Judas Thaddeus. Was there anyone better for foot problems? She asked Jupp about it. The old coachman slowly shook his head.

“You can’t beat St. Judas and his walking stick,” he said.

* *

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Andrea thought nothing was more fun than swimming in the Rhine. They rode over the rich meadows away from the castle. Andrea was on her pony; Jan on a powerful Irish jumper and behind him came Pittje. They descended down to the Rhine, undressed.

The red and yellow polka dot swimsuit was long gone, had scarcely lasted a week when it finally fit. Katherine should have known that you couldn’t make a good swimsuit out of an old blouse! Andrea now had a real

swimsuit, blue with a white belt, exactly like her cousin's. Only his had a little money pouch so they could take his money with. They would need money on this swim journey.

First they played awhile on the sandy beach between Krippen and Buhnen, rode the horses into the water. Then they left their horses and clothes under Pittje's care, swam together into the current. They needed to be careful of the steamers pulling long barges; the passing wake rose high over their heads and washed over them. But Andrea had not been afraid of the water for a long time, felt very safe with her cousin. When she got tired she swam up to him, laid her left hand on his shoulder, hung on and let him tow her.

They floated down the Rhine in the July sun until they saw the towers of Emmerrich, then they crossed to the other side where there was a little beach and waited. It was a place where the steamers and barges passed close to the shore. They wanted to climb on to a barge and catch a ride back up the river. Jan would go first and climb into the barge, get a rope and throw it to Andrea and then pull her up into the barge as well. She would be waiting a few meters away for the rope. It needed exact timing and kept going wrong. They needed to wait for a second, then a third steamer and try it again. Each time they got better at it.

The last time they made it and easily without effort climbed into the barge. Then they called the pilot and he pulled the barge closer so they could climb onto the steamer. The trip back upstream went slowly enough, they came to the spot where Pittje was waiting with the horses, waved to him and continued up a bit before diving head first into the river and swimming back to the shore.

The most beautiful part of the journey was when they sat close together on the deck of the steamer in the sun. Jan pulled his money out and paid

their fare. The pilot brought them great slabs of white bread smothered in butter and topped with thick slices of glorious Holland cheese. Nothing in the world ever tasted more delicious than that food in the middle of the Rhine.

The sun laughed at them and everything was so young, so young!

They sat hand in hand, deeply quiet and contented staring out at the yellow-green waves and silver white combs or else they looked up at the light clouds in the blue sky circling around them.

Everything was so still. She heard her heart beating.

“Jan,” said Andrea.

“What?” he asked.

She said, “When I grow up I want to marry you.”

The youth laughed, “That could be a long wait Fundvogel! I don’t want to get married. The girls all seem so dumb to me.”

“Even me?” she asked.

“You,” he considered. “You are still much too young.”

She persisted, “But I will grow bigger. When I am grown up, then I will inherit all of Woyland. Grandmother told me. Then I will marry you and give it all to you. Do you hear me Jan?”

The youth gazed dreamily at the swiftly moving clouds.

“No,” he said lightly. “I don’t want Woyland. It is only good for the Holidays. I, I want to go out into the world.”

The little girl sighed, yet her hand continued to hold tightly onto his.

Fairyland

As the Hapag steamer lay in the harbor at Port-au-Prince little “Blue-ribbon” rushed into the breakfast hall. She ran all the way around the table breathlessly.

“Isn’t Mama here yet?”

No, Mama was still in her cabin. But the officers and the passengers all jumped up to take little “Blue-ribbon” onto their laps. Never had a Lady on board the “President” been so celebrated as this laughing six-year-old. If little “Blue-ribbon” drank out of their teacup they were happy the entire day.

She always wore a little white cambric dress and a little blue ribbon kissed her blonde locks. They asked her a hundred times a day:

“Why are you called little ‘Blue-ribbon’?”

Then she would laugh, “So they can find me again if I get lost!”—

But she never got lost, even when she was running around in a strange port alone. She was a Texas child and clever as a hound. Today no one at the table could catch her. She ran over the top of the table and climbed into the captain’s lap. The strong Norseman smiled at that. Little “Blue-ribbon” always liked him and that was the one thing he was proud of.

“Dunk!” said little “Blue-ribbon” and dunked her biscuit into his teacup.

“Where were you so early again today?” asked the captain.

“Oh,” said the child and her blue eyes glowed brighter than the ribbon in her hair. “Mama must come with! You all must come with! We are in fairyland!”

“In fairyland?—Haiti?” doubted the captain.

Little “Blue-ribbon” laughed.

“I have absolutely no idea what this land here is called—but it is fairyland! I have seen it myself, the wonderful monsters sitting altogether on the bridge to the market place. One has big hands like a cow and the one next to him has a head like two cows! And one has a scaly skin like a crocodile—

Oh, they are much more beautiful and wonderful than the ones in my book of fairytales! —Will you come with captain?”

Then she sprang up and ran to the beautiful woman that was just entering the hall.

“Mama, quick, drink your tea! Quick, quick! You must come with Mama. We are in fairyland!”

Everyone went with, even the first engineer. He had no time to spare at all and hadn’t even appeared for breakfast. Something was not right with his engine and he needed to fix it while they lay in port. But little “Blue-ribbon” liked him because he carved pretty turtle shells for her. That was why he had to go with. Then little “Blue-ribbon” led the company off board.

“I will even work through the entire night,” he said to the captain.

Little “Blue-ribbon” heard and nodded earnestly, “Yes, do that. I will be sleeping then.”

Little “Blue-ribbon” led as they hurried through the dirty streets of the harbor. Everywhere curious black faces poked out of windows and doors. They jumped over the broad gutter and little “Blue-ribbon” laughed delightedly as the doctor stumbled and sprayed dirty water all over his white suit. They walked on between the miserable stalls of the market, through the ear shattering noises of shrieking Negro women.

“See, see, there they are! Oh, the sweet monsters!”

Little “Blue-ribbon” tore herself loose from her mother’s hand and rushed up over the little stone bridge that led over a dried up creek.

“Come everyone, come quick. See the marvelous creatures, the splendid monsters!”

She clapped her hands enthusiastically and leapt with quick strides through the hot dust—There lay the beggars, showing off their horrible diseases. The Negroes went carelessly past, but no stranger could go past them without reaching deeply into their pockets. The beggars knew that very well and took advantage of it. Those that drew back at the fearful sight would give a quarter and the Lady that became sick would give at least a dollar.

“Oh, just look, Mama. That one there with the scaly skin! Isn’t he beautiful?”

She pointed out a Negro whose entire body was pitted and disfigured with a grisly moss. He looked greenish-yellow and his hardened scabs really hung like three-cornered scales over his skin.

“And that one there, captain. Look, that one there. Oh, how funny he looks. He has a buffalo head and his fur cap has grown stuck on him!”

Little “Blue-ribbon” tapped with her parasol on the giant black head. He suffered from horrible elephantiasis and his head was swollen up like a giant pumpkin. His hair was tangled and hung down like thick long rags on all sides. The captain tried to pull the little one back but she tugged him along, quivering in excitement, going from one to another.

“Oh, dear captain, have you ever seen such hands? Tell me, aren’t they marvelous—wonderful?—”

Little “Blue-ribbon” beamed with enthusiasm and bent down deeply to a beggar whose hands were both swollen from elephantiasis.

“Mama, Mama, just look. His finger is much thicker and longer than my entire arm! Oh Mama, if only I could have such hands! And she laid her little hands in the broad outstretched hand of the Negro. Like a tiny white mouse it trembled on the immense brown surface.

The beautiful woman screamed loudly and fell in a deep faint into the arms of the engineer. Everyone occupied themselves with her. The doctor filled his handkerchief with *Eau de Cologne* and laid it on her forehead. But little “Blue-ribbon” searched in her mother’s purse, took out a little bottle of smelling salts and held it right under her nose. She knelt on the ground and large tears dropped out of her blue eyes and moistened her mother’s face.

“Mama, dear sweet Mama, please wake up again! Please, please, please Mama! Oh, wake up quick, dear Mama. There are still so many marvelous creatures I want to show you! No, you can’t sleep now Mama, we are in fairyland!”

Alraune and her Chauffeur

These were the five men that loved Alraune ten Brinken: Karl Mohnen, Hans Geroldingen, Wolf Gontram, Jakob ten Brinken and Raspe, the chauffeur. The Privy Councilor's brown volume speaks of them all and this story of Alraune must speak of them as well.

Raspe, Matthieu-Maria Raspe, came with the Opel automobile that Princess Wolkonski gave to Alraune on her seventeenth birthday. He had served with the Hussars but now he not only had to drive the car, he had to help the old coachman with the horses as well. He was married and had two little boys. Lisbeth, his wife, took care of the laundry in the house of ten Brinken. They lived in the little cottage near the library right beside the iron-gated entrance to the courtyard.

Matthieu was blonde, big and strong. He understood his work and used his head as well as his hands. The horses obeyed his touch just as well as the automobile did. Early one morning he saddled the Irish mare of his Mistress, stood in the courtyard and waited. The Fräulein slowly came down the steps from the mansion. She was dressed as a young boy wearing yellow leather gaiters, a gray riding suit and a little riding cap to cover her hair.

She did not use the stirrup but had him lace his fingers together, stepped into them and stayed like that for a short second before swinging herself up astride the saddle. Then she hit the horse a sharp blow with the whip so that it reared up and tore out through the open gate. Mattheiu-Maria had all kinds of trouble mounting his heavy chestnut gelding and catching up to her.

Brown haired Lisbeth closed the gate behind them. She pressed her lips together and watched them go–her husband whom she loved and Fräulein

ten Brinken whom she hated.

Somewhere out in the meadow the Fräulein came to a stop, turned around and let him catch up.

“Where should we ride today, Matthieu-Maria?” she asked.

He said, “Wherever the Fräulein commands.”

Then she tore the mare around and galloped further.

“Jump Nellie!” she cried.

Raspe hated these morning rides no less than his wife did. It was as if the Fräulein rode alone, as if he were only air, a part of the landscape, or as if he did not exist at all to his mistress. But then when she did take the trouble to notice him for even a second he felt still more annoyed. For then it was certain that she was going to demand something unusual of him once more.

She stopped at the Rhine and waited quietly until he came up to her side. He rode as slow as he could, knowing that she had come up with some new notion and hoped she would forget it by the time he got there. But she never forgot a notion.

“Matthieu-Maria,” she said, “should we swim across?”

He raised objections knowing ahead of time that it would be useless.

“The banks on the other side are too steep,” he said. “You can’t climb back up out of the water, especially right here where the current is so rapid and—”

He got angry. It was all so pointless, the things his mistress did. Why should they ride across the Rhine? They would get all wet and cold. He would be lucky not to come down with a cold from it. It was all for nothing, once more for nothing. He made up his mind to stay behind. She could do her foolishness alone. What was it to him? He had a wife and children—

That was as far as he got before riding into the stream. He plunged deep into the water with his heavy Mecklenburger and had all kinds of trouble arriving safely somewhere onto the rocks on the other side. He shook himself off angrily and swore, then rode out of the stream at a sharp trot up to his mistress. She gave him a brief sardonic glance.

"Did you get wet, Matthieu-Maria?"

He remained quiet, insulted and angry. Why did she have to call him by his forename? Why was she so familiar with him? He was Raspe, the chauffeur, and not a stable boy. His brain found a dozen good replies but his lips didn't speak them.

Another day they rode to the dunes where the Hussars practiced. That was even more embarrassing to him. Many of the officers and non-commissioned officers knew him from the time he had served with the regiment.

The mustached sergeant of the 2nd squadron called out derisively to him.

"Well Raspe, are you going to ride with us awhile?"

"The devil take that crazy female," growled Raspe.

But he galloped along at the rear and during the attack rode at the side of the Fräulein. Then Count Geroldingen, cavalry captain, came over with his English piebald to chat with the Fräulein. Raspe stayed back but she spoke loud enough so that he could hear.

"Well count, how do you like my esquire?"

The cavalry captain laughed, "Splendid! Well suited for such a young prince as yourself!"

Raspe wanted to box his ears, the Fräulein's as well, and the sergeant's, and the entire squadron that was grinning at him. He was embarrassed and turned red as a schoolboy.

But the afternoons were even worse when he had to go driving with her in the automobile. He sat in his place behind the wheel squinting at the door and sighed in relief when someone came out of the house with her, suppressed a curse when she came out alone.

Often he had his wife find out if she wanted to go driving alone. Then he would quickly take a few parts out of the machine and lie under it on his back, greasing and cleaning them as if he were repairing something.

“We can’t go driving today Fräulein,” he would say.

Then he would smile in satisfaction after she was out of the garage. One time it didn’t go so well for him. She stayed there in the garage quietly waiting. She didn’t say anything, but it seemed to him as if she knew very well what he was up to. Then he slowly bolted everything back together.

“Ready?” she asked.

He nodded.

“You see,” she said, “how much better it goes when I’m here Matthieu-Maria.”

When he came back from that drive, when his Opel was once more in the garage and he was setting down to the meal his wife set out for him, he trembled, he was pale and his eyes stared at nothing. Lisbeth didn’t ask, she knew what it was about.

“That damned female!” he murmured.

She brought out the blonde, blue eyed boys to him, white in their fresh pajamas and set one on each knee. Slowly he became happy and at ease with his laughing children. Then after his boys were in bed, he sat outside on the stone bench smoking his cigarette, strolled through the village and through the ancient garden of the Brinkens, talking things over with his wife.

“No good can come of it,” he said. “She rushes and rushes. No speed is fast enough for her. Fourteen speeding tickets in three weeks—”

“You don’t have to pay them,” said Frau Lisbeth.

“No,” he said. “But I am notorious for it. The police take out their notebooks whenever they see the white car with ‘I.Z.937’ on it!”

He laughed, “Well, they aren’t wrong in taking our number. We deserve every one of our tickets.”

He quieted, took a wrench out of his pocket and played with it. His wife pushed her arm under his, took his cap off and stroked back his tangled hair.

“What does she want anyway?” she asked.

She took pains to make her voice sound innocent and indifferent.

Raspe shook his head, “I don’t know Lisbeth. She is crazy. That’s what it is and she has some damned way about her that makes people do what she wants even when they are entirely against it and know that it is wrong.”

“What did she do today?” his wife asked.

He said, “No more than usual. She can’t stand to see another car in front of us. She must pass it and even if it has thirty more horsepower than ours, she wants to catch up to it. ‘Catch it,’ she says to me and if I hesitate she lightly touches my arm with her hand and I let loose as if the devil himself were driving the machine.”

He sighed, brushed the cigarette ash off his pants.

“She always sits next to me,” he continued, “and just her sitting there makes me really upset and nervous. All I can think about is what kind of foolishness she’s going to make me do this time. Her greatest joy is jumping the car over obstacles, boards, sand piles and things like that. I’m no coward, but there should be some purpose to it if you are going to risk your life every day. ‘Just drive,’ she says. ‘Nothing will happen to me.’ She

is calm when she jumps over a road ditch at one hundred kilometers/hour. It's possible that nothing can happen to her, but some time I'm going to make a mistake, tomorrow or the next day!"

Lisbeth pressed his hand. "You must simply try to not obey her. Say 'No' when she wants to do something stupid! You are not permitted to take such chances with your life. It is not fair to us, to me or the children."

He looked straight at her, still and calm. "I know that. It's not fair to you or even to myself. But you see, that's just it. I can not say 'No' to the Fräulein. Nobody can. Look how young Herr Gontram runs after her like a puppy dog, look at the way the others are happy to fulfill all of her foolish notions! Not one of all the people in the household can endure being around the Fräulein. Yet everyone of them will do what she wants even if it is stupid or disgusting."

"That's not true!" said Lisbeth. "Froitsheim, the coachman, won't, not at all."

He whistled, "Froitsheim! You're right. He turns around and walks away whenever he sees her. But he is almost ninety years old and hasn't had any blood in his body for a long time."

She looked at him in surprise, "Does she stir your blood then, Matthieu? Is that why you must do what she wants?"

He evaded her eyes and looked down at the ground. But then he took her hand and looked straight at her.

"Well you see Lisbeth, I don't know what it is. I've often thought about it, what it really is. When I see her I get so angry that I could strangle her. When she's not there I run around full of fear that she might call me."

He spit on the ground. "Damn it all!" he cried. "I wish I was rid of this job! Wish I had never accepted it."

They talked it over, turning it this way and that, weighing everything for and against it and finally they came to the conclusion that he should give his notice. But before doing that he should go into the city the very next day and look for a new position.

That night Frau Lisbeth slept peacefully for the first time in months but Matthieu-Maria didn't sleep at all. He requested a leave of absence the next morning and went to the job placement office in the city. He was really lucky. The agent took him to meet with a Councilor of the Chamber of Commerce that was looking for a chauffeur and he got the job. He received a higher salary than what he had been getting, fewer work hours and didn't have to do anything with horses.

As they stepped out of the house the agent congratulated him. But he had a feeling as if there was nothing he should be thankful for, as if he would never work at this new job.

Still, it made him happy to see his wife's eyes light up in joy when he told her.

"In fourteen days," he said. "If only the time was already gone!"

She shook her head. "No," she said firmly. "Not fourteen days. Do it tomorrow! You must insist, talk with the Privy Councilor."

"That won't do any good," he replied. "He would inform the Fräulein and then—"

Frau Lisbeth grasped his hand. "Leave it alone!" she decided. "I will speak with the Fräulein myself."

She left him standing there, went across the courtyard and announced herself. While she waited she considered exactly what she wanted to say so they would be permitted to leave that very morning. But she didn't need to say anything at all. The Fräulein only listened, heard that he wanted to go without notice, nodded curtly and said that it was all right.

Frau Lisbeth flew back to her man, embraced and kissed him.

“Only one more night and the bad dream will be over.”

They must pack quickly and he should telephone the Councilor to the Chamber of Commerce to tell him that he could begin his new job the next morning. They pulled the old trunk out from under the bed and her bright enthusiasm infected him. He pulled out his iron bound chest as well, dusted it off and helped her pack, passing things to her. He ran into the village to hire a boy to bring a cart for hauling things away. He laughed and was content for the first time in the house of ten Brinken.

Then, as he was taking a cook pot from the stove and wrapping it in newspaper Aloys, the servant, came.

He announced, “The Fräulein wants to go driving.”

Raspe stared at him and didn’t say a word.

“Don’t go!” cried his wife.

He said, “Please inform the Fräulein that as of today I am no longer—”

He didn’t finish. Alraune ten Brinken stood in the door.

She said, “Matthieu-Maria, I let you go tomorrow. Today you will go driving with me.”

Then she left and behind her went Raspe.

“Don’t go! Don’t go!” screamed Frau Lisbeth.

He could hear her screams but didn’t know who it was or where they came from. Frau Lisbeth fell heavily onto the bench. She heard both of their steps as they crossed the courtyard to the garage. She heard the iron gate creak open on its hinges, heard the auto as it drove out onto the street and heard as well the short blast of the horn. That was the farewell greeting her husband always gave each time he left for the city. She sat there with both hands on her lap and waited, waited until they brought him back. Four farmers carried him in on a mattress and laid him down in the middle of the

room among the trunks and boxes. They undressed him, helped wash him and did as the doctor commanded. His long white body was full of blood, dust and dirt.

Frau Lisbeth knelt beside him without words, without tears. The old coachman came and took the screaming boys away. Then the farmers left and finally the doctor as well. She never asked him, not with words or with her eyes. She already knew the answer that he would give.

Once in the middle of the night Raspe woke up and opened his eyes. He recognized her, asked for some water and she gave him some to drink.

"It is over," he said weakly.

She asked, "What happened?"

He shook his head, "I don't know. The Fräulein said, 'Faster, Matthieu-Maria'. I didn't want to do it. Then she laid her hand on mine and I felt her through my glove and I did it. That's all I know."

He spoke so softly that she had to put her ear next to his mouth to hear and when he was quiet she whispered.

"Why did you do it?"

Again he moved his lips, "Forgive me Lisbeth! I had to do it. The Fräulein—"

She looked at him, startled by the hot look in his eyes, and her tongue suddenly cried out the thought almost before her brain could even think it.

"You, you love her?"

Then he raised his head the width of a thumb and murmured with closed eyes, "Yes, yes—I—love driving—with her."

Those were the last words he spoke. He sank back into a deep faint and lay like that until the early morning when he passed away. Frau Lisbeth stood up. She ran to the door and old Froitsheim took her into his arms.

"My husband is dead," she said.

The coachman made the sign of the cross and made to go past her into the room but she held him back.

“Where is the Fräulein?” she asked quickly. “It she alive? Is she hurt?”

The deep wrinkles in the old face deepened, “Is she alive?—Whether she even lives! She’s standing over there! Wounded? Not a scratch. She just got a little dirty!”

He pointed with trembling fingers out into the courtyard. There stood the slender Fräulein in her boy’s suit, setting her foot into the laced fingers of a Hussar, swinging up into the saddle.

“She telephoned the cavalry captain,” said the old coachman. “Told him she had no groom this morning, so the count sent that fellow over.”

Lisbeth ran across the courtyard.

“He is dead!” she cried. “My man is dead.”

Alraune ten Brinken turned around in the saddle, toyed with the riding whip.

“Dead,” she said slowly. “Dead. That’s really too bad.”

She lightly struck her horse and walked it up to the gate.

“Fräulein,” screamed Frau Lisbeth. “Fräulein, Fräulein—”

Frau Lisbeth ran to the Privy Councilor overflowing with all her despair and hatred. The Privy Councilor let her talk until she quieted down. Then he said that he understood her pain and was not offended at what she had said. He was also prepared, despite the notice, to pay three months of her husband’s wages. But she needed to be reasonable, should be able to see that her husband alone carried the blame for the regrettable accident.

She ran to the police and they were not even polite to her. They had seen it coming, they said. Everyone knew that Raspe was the wildest driver on the entire Rhine. They had done their duty many times by trying to warn

him. She should be ashamed of herself for trying to lay the blame on the young Fräulein! Had she ever been seen driving? Yesterday or ever?

Then she ran to an attorney, then a second and a third. But they were honest people and told her that they could not move forward with a lawsuit even when she wanted to pay in advance. Oh, certainly, anything was possible and conceivable, why not? But did she have any proof? No, none at all. Well then! She should just go quietly back home. There was nothing that she could do. Even if everything that she said was true and could be proved—her husband would still carry the blame. He was a grown man, a skilled and experienced chauffeur, while the Fräulein was an inexperienced scarcely grown thing—

So she went back home. She buried her husband in the little cemetery behind the church. She packed all her things and loaded them onto the cart herself. She took the money the Privy Councilor had given her, took her boys and left.

A couple of days later a new chauffeur moved into her old living quarters. He was short, fat and drank a lot. Fräulein ten Brinken didn't like him and seldom went driving alone with him. He never got any speeding tickets and the people said that he was a good driver, much better than wild Raspe had been.

The Last Will of Stanislawa d'Asp

It is true that Stanislawa d'Asp treated the Count Vincenz d'Ault-Onival miserably through two complete years. Every evening he sat in the parquette while she sang her sentimental songs and traveled after her, every month, to other cities. She gave his roses to a white rabbit to eat, with which she shared the stage. She hocked his diamonds in order to invite colleagues and sponging Bohemians to parties.

Once he lifted her out of the gutter, when she was drunk and staggering back home with a little journalist. She laughed in his face:

"Come along with! You can hold the light for us!"

There was not the smallest offense which she spared the Count. She spoke words that came from straight out of a lousy bed in a stinking harbor bordello, gestures— so shameless that they would make even a pimp blush, scenes from out of books, so full of a prostitute's instinct, which an Aretin would disown, and he had to endure if he even dared to come near her.

The celebrities at the Variété loved him, and had an infinite compassion for the poor fool. They did take the money that the prostitute squandered, but they hated her so completely and despised her, this whore that compromised their honorable profession, whose skill was rubbish and she had nothing, other than her blinding beauty. And the oldest of the "Five Hobson Brothers", Fritz Jakobskötter from Pirna, hit her on the head once with a bottle of red wine, so that her blonde hair was thick with clotting blood.

Then, one evening, when she was again so hoarse, that she could scarcely bring a note out over her parched lips, when the theater doctor after a fleeting examination of her gruffly declared, that she was in the last stages of tuberculosis—that she had known for a long time—and that in a couple

of months she would be with the devil, if she continued with her loose living, that was when she called the Count into her dressing room. She spit at him as he entered, and told him that she was now ready to be his mistress. As he bowed down to her, to kiss her hand, she pushed him away and laughed. But the short wave of poison laughter tore at her lungs, and she bent over in a choking fit of coughing. Then, scarcely again still, she leaned forward over her makeup and powder puffs, mopping her mouth and whimpering over a silk handkerchief. The Count softly laid his hand on her locks; at which she jumped up.

"Just take me now!"

She held the cloth under his nose, full of blood and yellow slime.

"There, my Herr—that is what I am worth!"

That was Stanislawa d'Asp. —But it is no lie, that the prostitute became a Lady from that day on. The Count took her around Europe, brought her from one sanitarium to another. She did what he said, and what the doctors said; never complained and never gave the slightest resistance. She didn't die; she lived for months and years and healed herself, slowly, but always more and more. And gradually she allowed her glance to rest on the Count from time to time. With this peace, with this quiet, eternally even life, gratitude grew in her.

As she left Algiers, the doctor said that it was entirely possible that she might become completely healthy again. The Count turned away, but she could see his little tears. And suddenly, to make his joy even greater, she touched his hand. She felt how he trembled; and she smiled at that:

"Vincenz, I will become healthy for you."

That was the first time she had spoken his name, the first time she had spoken informally, and the first time that she had ever touched him. He

looked at her—then rushed away, no longer master of himself. But as she looked after him, the bitter gall climbed high in her throat—

"Ah, if he only didn't want to cry."

And yet her gratitude and her compassion for him grew. A guilty conscience, a feeling of duty, that this immense love must be returned. And also a type of respect, a great admiration for this remarkable love, that is born in one second and lasts for an entire human life. When she sat on the beach chair and day dreamed while watching the waves, she thought about it a lot. Then a conviction grew in her that this love was not possible; that she had found something so majestic, so miraculous, that it only came once in every century. And then as she began to love—and as she loved—*she didn't love him, but only his great love.*

She didn't tell him that, she knew that he would not understand her. But from then on she did everything she could to make him happy. And only one single time did she say "No!"

That was when he asked her to be his wife. But the Count wouldn't give up and it went on for months. She said that she would write his family if he didn't listen to her. He wrote to them himself and shared his engagement. First a cousin came, then an uncle; they called her charming and very understanding, but they called him a thick headed idiot. The Count laughed and said that he would do whatever he wanted. Then his old mother came; Stanislawa d'Asp played her greatest trump. He knew what she had been and could tell his mother himself. But then she showed his mother her papers, and said that her real name was Lea Lewi and that she was born out of wedlock. And she was a Jew and would remain one her entire life long.

So, and if Count Vincenz d' Ault-Onival, the Marquis of Ronval, the pious son of the Christian houses of Normandy still wanted to marry her,

then she would be glad to do it. Then she went out of the room and left him with the old Countess Widow.

What she did was well thought out. She knew the Count very well and knew how much he lived his childish beliefs, knew that he could not get up or go to bed, not eat a meal, without saying a prayer. Oh, very softly, unnoticeably and no stranger would notice. She knew that he went to Mass and to Confession, knew also, that he did everything out of a deepest, innermost feeling. And she also knew how much he doted on his mother, how he loved her and honored her. She would now speak to him, the clever old woman, and once more tell him how impossible this marriage was, how he was making a fool of himself in front of his own people and sinning against his mother and his own beliefs—

She stood on her balcony and waited. She knew every word that the mother spoke, had said it herself. In doing this his fondness for his mother and her prompting, would provide the reasons that only she could convincingly give. Yes, an ocean of impossibilities would stand between her and his love and then—then he would—

Then something occurred to her. She ran through the room and across into the one of the Countess. She tore the door open and pressed in to the twilight, hastily, out of breath, gasping for words. She remained standing in front of the old Lady; the syllables came out hard and edged:

“And my children—if I have any children—will be Jewish, Jewish, like I am!”

She didn’t wait for an answer, but ran out to her room and fell heavily on the bed. So, now it was decided! Oh, that must certainly cast him down, that tall stupid boy, that sentimental aristocrat from a strange world, that Christian nursemaid with his faith and his love. And she felt a great

satisfaction that she had finally found a door, too iron, too strong for this immense love that she always felt, and yet didn't understand at all.

She knew that now she could leave him, could go away, to the Variété once more, to the bordello, or jump off the Sorrentiner cliffs—it was all the same. But she felt strong and great in her early instinct, like when she spit at him and boxed his ears with dirty words. The Count had misplayed and she was once more a prostitute, a miserable, pathetic prostitute and no power in heaven could tear her from out of all the filth.

Then the door opened. She jumped up from the bed, certain in her old laugh. Dirty phrases that she had long forgotten rattled in her brain. Oh, she knew how she wanted to receive the Count!

It was the old Lady. She came up quietly to the young woman, sat down on the bed, and pulled her close. Stanislawa heard her words, but scarcely understood them. It seemed to her as if an organ were softly playing in the distance. And these tones spoke to her and she could only feel what they wanted.

She could do whatever she wanted; everything, everything. Only she could marry her son, could make him happy. She herself, his mother, had come to plead for him. Because his love was so great—

At that Stanislawa stood up and said:

"Because his love is so great."

She let herself be led over to the Count. She allowed him to kiss her and his mother to kiss her. She felt: That it was a salvation and complete healing of body and soul.

Because now her life was just a vessel for its precious contents: her faith in his great love.

Stanislawa married the Count. It was a strange life that she led during those months. She didn't love him; she understood that completely. But it

was as if she still cowered, on soft furs in front of the fireplace; and this gentle warmth softly caressed her cool flesh. She was always tired, so completely tired; that she dreamed in a half sleep of his warm love. She smiled contentedly to herself when he kissed her hands. He thought that she was completely happy. But it was not happiness that made her smile, it was always the thought of this unbelievable love, that was as infinite as the world, and in which she floated, lightly carried on a warm breeze, a tumbling leaf in the afternoon wind. During this time all desire died in her, all her distant past was drowned. And her faith grew, and she knew very well where she lay, and that in all the days there was nothing that his love would not do for her.

From time to time, oh, not very often, she would test this rare love, this mysterious power, that could do anything. In Auteuil she placed a couple gold pieces on some bad horse.

"Don't do it," said the Count. "It is not worth it."

Then she looked straight at him, with a long look:

"But isn't it true, Vincenz, that it will still win?—I would like it to win."

And as they ran the race, she didn't watch the horse; she only watched him down below by the starting gate. She saw how he clasped his hands, how his lips moved softly. She knew that he was praying. Then as the favorites fell to the right and to the left and the pathetic underdog took first place, she understood that he had done it with the power of his great love.

Then came the time when Jan Olieslagers stepped into her life. He was a friend of the Count from school days and had remained one throughout the years. He ran around the world and no one ever knew where he was. But then a postcard would come from him from somewhere, from Cochinchina,

from Paraguay or Rhodesia. Now he was back in Europe and the Count invited him to his castle at Ronval.

Then everything happened very quickly. The Fleming liked this woman and he was accustomed to taking what he liked. Once, much later, he felt reproach about taking the wife of his good friend, whom he didn't even love. He said:

"He was my friend—but why was he such an ass? And then: "Did my lips ever possess just one woman alone? Why should anyone Herr be better than any other?"—

So he took Stanislawa, like he rode the Count's horses, like he drove the Count's auto, like he ate his bread and drank his wine. Those things that he did were so self-evident and without interest. And in the end it was very natural that the woman gave herself to him, without strings, without resistance, from one day to the next.

It was not as if, even for a second, the old prostitute had awoken within her. Jan Olieslagers was ravishing the Countess d'Ault-Onival and not Lea Lewi. And perhaps she would have scarcely troubled herself over him, certainly not fallen in love with him, if he had not set her pulse in flames. Not because he was a good rider—the Count was a much better rider than he was. But because to the horse, he was a different rider, oh, an entirely different rider, than the one she had been seeing. The Count was always the same, whether he was on the hunt or sitting at the bridge table. And this man was always something different, as was what he did. Everything was a game for him, but he played everything equally well. There was nothing in the world that he took seriously; even though he was interested in everything, nothing really seemed to be worth that interest to him. Only that he was there and lived. That was the main thing for him, and this single

instinct was so rooted and so strong, that he unconsciously carried it over into his environment.

Perhaps that was the basis of his victory. People forgot him quickly, when he was away; but when he was there, he was the Herr.

Stanislawa d'Asp found in him a new and wider world. A world of puzzles and mysteries, full of locked gates and towers, which he had no intention of opening. With the Count, everything was simple and clear; like in the quiet castle park where they strolled. He knew every flower bed and every rose bush, and like the mighty oak, which no storm from the west could uproot, proud and upright; was his great love.

But in the other they ran in an enchanted garden of confusion. She walked on one of the paths that seemed beautiful to her, more beautiful than any of the others in the castle park. It seemed to lead into infinity and yet ended after a few steps, blocked by impenetrable prickly hedges. She turned down another path and it was blocked by some silly animal. And she could not find a way out and almost fainted in the heavy perfume that so curiously aroused her sleeping senses—

But the Fleming didn't seek anything with this woman. And one evening at dinner, he said, that he had spent a charming week at the quiet castle and that he was thankful from his heart to his friend and the gracious Countess. But now he had to leave, go back out into the world, and that tomorrow he would be leaving for Bombay. He said all of this lightly, but it was all true. The Count urged him to remain, but the Countess didn't say a single word. Only when she stood up, and the Count gave orders to the servants for the departure, did she ask the guest to follow her into the garden.

And there she told him that she wanted to go with him. Jan Olieslagers was caught up in the scene; just enough so that he lost his certainty, just a

little, and searched for words and reasons that might appear reasonable, for some speech that would give him a way out. He didn't wish to tell her that he didn't want her company; that she was not his at all and in his memory of the large castle, was at the most, a little, lost treasure. She was some flower, plucked in passing for his button-hole; good for the afternoon, until evening when he changed suits for dinner.

—That he had found her suitable for that purpose, and that the Countess must know that was the truth of it. And then the rest would work out as well. So with emotion and good intentions he uttered a couple of phrases: that he had fought for a long time and his heart had almost broken. But he was accustomed to the great life and decidedly could not miss it any more. He scarcely had enough for his own comforts and by far not enough for the tastes of the Countess. She was so accustomed to luxury and comfort, and every deprivation would—

—and so they must separate, and that was why he was going now, so the separation would not be even more painful—

As always, in that moment he believed what he was saying; was so convinced of it, that the Countess took every syllable seriously. She became silent; then he wrapped his arms around her. A few tremors of his upper lip, just a couple words—no tears—fate—will meet again—sighs and tears—and then it would be better.

But the Countess turned to him. She straightened up and looked him straight in the face; then she said calmly:

"Vincenz will give us what we need."

He was speechless, stared at her, and choked out half words:

"Wha—?—Are you craz—"

But she wasn't listening to him anymore, was walking slowly back to the castle. And she was so certain of her cause, so certain in her strong faith

in the all-powerful love of the Count, that he would also give her this sacrifice, the greatest—so rock solid in her unwavering trust, that on the last step she turned and smiled back at him:

"Just wait for me!"

Her final gesture was so regal, that Jan Olieslagers almost found her charming again. He went back and forth in the moonlight, glanced at the castle, to see if there was a lit window. But he didn't see anything. He moved closer, to hear some voices, a scream, a hysterical sobbing. But he didn't hear anything. Not for a moment did he consider going inside. He had an instinctive aversion for everything that was unpleasant.

He just thought about how he would manage to get rid of this woman, if the Count was crazy enough to step aside and give her to him. How he could get rid of her, without being rough, being brutal. A couple of times he laughed out loud, as the humor of the situation came to his awareness. But it was not strong enough to be really enjoyable. Then, after weighing the situation from all sides and not finding any way out, he became bored with it—he gradually lost all interest in it. And finally, after stumbling around in the quiet park for an hour, it seemed to him as if nothing was going to happen after all. It was as if an unthinkable time had already passed, but to someone else and not to him. He yawned, and then went into the castle, through the long passage and up the stairs to his room. He undressed, softly whistled a bawdy street song, and went to bed.

The chambermaid woke him early, told him that his auto was ready, and helped him to pack. Jan Olieslagers didn't ask about the Master of the castle, but sat down to write the Count. Three letters, one after the other—but he tore them all up again. And as the car snorted through the park gate, out into the morning fog, he sighed in relief, "Thank God!"

He traveled to India. This time he didn’t write anymore postcards—but after another six months a letter caught up to him that had been following him for a month. The envelope bore his Paris address and was written in the Count’s handwriting. It contained the printed announcement of the death of the Countess. Jan Olieslagers responded immediately, wrote a long, clever letter that he was very satisfied with. There was nothing in it about forgiveness and yet it was open and without regret, it was a letter, that would make the kind of impression that he wanted it to. And he felt contentment as he placed it in the mailbox, as if he had done a good deed. But he received no answer; and it was only two years later, when he was once more in Paris for several months, that a second letter from the Count reached him.

It was short, but sincere, almost cordial, as in the old times. The Count asked him, for the sake of their boyhood friendship, to come back to Ronval as soon as possible. It involved the last will and testament of the Countess.

Jan Olieslagers hesitated; this trip could certainly not bring anything pleasant. He felt no sense of curiosity over the outcome of this family drama, which had not touched him for a long time. It was really the remnant of childhood friendship that finally decided him.

The Count was not at the train station. But the servant, that had driven him from the train station, asked him to go right into the library; that the Count was awaiting him there. After this reception Jan Olieslagers was certain that his new stay at the castle would scarcely be a pleasant one. So he didn’t go right to the Count, but gave into the feeling that everything unpleasant would be experienced soon enough, went into his room, which the maid servant showed him, slowly took a bath, got dressed, announced that he was hungry and had dinner brought to his room. It was already quite

late in the evening when he decided with a sigh, to finally search out his old friend.

He found him sitting in front of the fireplace. No book, no newspaper lay nearby, yet he must have been sitting there for hours; the ashtray was over flowing with cigarette butts.

“Ah, there you are finally,” he said quietly, “I’ve been waiting a long time for you. Would you like a drink?”

The Fleming was not very enthused about this greeting, he toasted his friend. Three, four glasses of stout burgundy—then he found his old certainty again. He blew cigarette smoke into the fire, and came up directly in front of the wide easy chair. And it sounded almost well intended, as he said:

“Now explain!”

But he immediately regretting this loud tone; became almost compassionate, as he heard the imposing words:

“Excuse me—but don’t you want to tell me something first?”

Then Jan Olieslagers began to go back and forth, became sentimental, and started to excuse himself—mea culpa.

The Count protected him from it. Before the other could even stammer a syllable, he began once more:

“No, no! Excuse me, I will not torment you. Stanislawa told me everything.”

Somewhat uncertain, the Fleming repeated:

“She told you everything?”

“Yes, really; after she left you in the park. By the way—I would have been able to tell all that myself. It would have been a miracle if you hadn’t loved her.”

His friend moved in his chair.

“Just be still. And that she loved you was just as natural. It was even my fault; I should not have invited you here. I made both of you unhappy—and myself as well—forgive me.”

The Fleming became very uncomfortable. He threw his just lit cigarette into the fire and took out a new one.

“Stanislawa said that you loved each other. She asked me to give you the means, which you didn’t have. Wasn’t that grand of her?”

The other gulped back the words that wanted to form on his lips. He was scarcely able to utter:

“Dear God—”

“But I couldn’t do it. I also didn’t understand at first just how strong and great her desire was. I denied it to her and let you go. How unhappy you must have been, my poor friend—can you forgive me? I know how men long for her, and I know how she needs to love men, this woman!”

Jan Olieslagers leaned forward, grabbed the fire tongs, and pushed in the coals. His role in this play was unbearable; he wanted to make an end of it.

Brusquely he said:

“Hang me, I know it too.”

But the Count continued, always in calm, sorrowful tones:

“I believe you, that you know it. But I couldn’t do it—couldn’t let her go. I didn’t have the strength to do it. Will you forgive me?”

The other sprang up, brutally in his face:

“If you don’t stop with this foolishness, I am going to leave immediately.”

Yet the Count grabbed his hands:

“Forgive me; I will not torture you any further. I only wanted—”

Then Jan Olieslagers saw completely, that his friend was possessed, so he gave in. He returned the hand shake powerfully and sighed:

“In the name of God, I forgive you!”

Then the other:

“I thank you.”

Then they were both silent.

After a while the Count stood up and took a large, framed photo from a nearby table. He handed it to his friend:

“Here, for you.”

It was a picture of the Countess on her deathbed. She was laid out; on both sides were magnificently crafted silver lamps, a present of Ludwig XIII to some ancestor. A Black pearl rosary hung over the bed post; it threw a soft shadow across the face of the deceased. Perhaps it was only this shadow that gave the impression, as if someone living were lying there. Really the eyes were closed, the features rigid and the impression was not at all that of someone sleeping. But a strange, scornful smile played over the half-open lips—

The lace dress was buttoned tightly around her neck; the wide sleeves almost fell down over her knuckles. And the long, slender hands, with almost transparent fingers, folded over her breasts, tightly held an ivory crucifix.

“She became Catholic?” the Fleming asked.

“Yes, she converted on the last day,” affirmed the Count. “But you know”, he continued quietly, “I believe that she only did it to make my oath more certain.”

“Which oath?”

“Oh, already on the day before her death she made me swear, that I would carry out her last will and testament to the letter. It is nothing very

special, it concerns only her internment in the castle chapel; she told me that much even though I am opening her will and testament for the first time today."

"Hasn't she been interred yet?"

"Oh no! Haven't you ever been in the chapel in the park? Almost all of my ancestors were first buried in the little cemetery that is next to it. Only after one year are they then exhumed and the bones placed in large urns of baked clay. It is an old Normandy custom, which dates back to the chronicles of Roger the Red. I think it was started with him, because hardly any of these adventurers ever died at home. At least their comrades brought the bones back to the widows. In our charnel house rests Philipp, who fell at Jaffé; and Autodorn, whom they call the Provincial, because his mother was a Countess of Orange. King Harold killed him at Hastings. Also the bastard Richard rests there, the one the Calvinist Heinrich had executed, because he attempted the dagger stroke twenty years too early, which Ravaillac had better luck with. He took the broken corpse of his own father down from the wheel during the night and fled here with it, which the Counts La-Motte and Croixau-Bailly later had to atone for, after the king moved to Paris and became Catholic.

They all rest there, my ancestors, men and women, and no one is missing—

I would have certainly interred her there, even against her desire. But she didn't trust me—after what happened—perhaps she believed, that I would deny her that honor. That is why she had me swear."

"She didn't trust you?"

"No, so much so, that my promise to her and my oath in her hand was not certain enough. She rolled around in her pillows and sighed and gnashed her teeth for hours. Then suddenly she sent me away to bring the

priest. I sent for him; she hardly expected that he would come. When he finally came, she asked which oath was the most sacred for a Christian; he answered:

“The one on the crucifix.”

Then she asked him again, whether the church could release someone from an oath that had been given to a nonbeliever. The old priest panicked; in a quandary, he hesitated, then said, that every oath was sacred, but that the church perhaps, under certain conditions—

Then the Countess grabbed him with both hands, pulled herself up and screamed:

“I want to become a Christian!”

The priest hesitated, didn’t give an answer right away. But the Countess tore at him, almost shaking him and screamed again:

“Didn’t you hear? I want to become a Christian!”

The Count had not raised his voice for even a minute, but he choked and a little sweat stood on his forehead. He took the glass that his friend handed him, and emptied it. Then he continued:

The priest instructed her, competently, quietly, in a few words. He spoke to her gently about our beliefs, without tormenting the dying woman too much. Then he baptized her and at the same time gave her the Last Rite. As the sacred ceremony came to an end, she took the priest’s hands once more. Her voice sounded so soft, so happy, like that of an angel, as she asked him:

“I beg you, please give me the crucifix.”

The priest gave it to her, and she grabbed it with both hands.

“Priest,” she said, “That which is now sworn to me in Christ’s name on this crucifix; that must be done?”—

“Yes!”—

“Unbreakable?”—

“Unbreakable!”

She fell back heavily onto the pillows.

“I thank you, priest. I don’t have any money, but I give you all of my jewelry. Sell it for the poor.”

That evening she didn’t speak another word. But the next morning she waved me up to her bed; she told me again, that her last will was locked in her writing desk. I was only to open it after a year, and in your presence.”

“In my presence?”

“Yes, she had me kneel and requested that I should once more swear, to fulfill her last will and testament. I assured her that my oath of yesterday would certainly be kept, but she wouldn’t give in. She had me lift up my right hand and lay my left on the crucifix, which she held tightly; slowly she spoke the words to me, which I repeated. So I have sworn twice.”

“Did she die then?”

“Yes, after a few hours. The priest came back once and spoke with her. But I don’t know if she was listening. Just once, when he said, that there would be a resurrection after the separation of death and that she would see me again; she turned half way around.

‘Yes priest, you may believe that: *He will certainly see me again.*’

Those were her last words. Then she smiled softly; and kept that smile, even after her death.”

The Count stood up and went to the door:

“Now I will get her last will and testament.”

Jan Olieslagers looked after him.

“Poor fellow,” he murmured, “There will be some real deviltry inside it.”

He took the carafe and poured both glasses completely full.

The Count brought in a leather folder and opened it up. He took out a little envelope and handed it to his friend.

“Me?” he asked.

“Yes, the Countess wanted you to open it.”

The Fleming hesitated for a moment; then he broke the seal. He tore open the envelope and read aloud the slanted writing on the violet paper:

The Last Will and Testament
Of Stanislawa d’Asp

I will, that they take what still remains of me, three years after my burial, from out of my coffin and place it in an urn in the castle chapel. There should be no service in any way, and other than the gardener, no one should be present other than Count Vincenz d’Ault-Onival and his friend Herr Jan Olieslagers. It should be an afternoon when the sun is shining; and before it sets, my remains shall rest in an urn in the chapel: *a memorial of the Count’s great love for me.*

Castle Ronval, 25. VI. 04.

Stanislawa, Countess d’Ault-Onival.

The Fleming handed the paper to the Count:

“Here—that is all of it.”

“I knew it; exactly like she said it to me. Did you believe that it would contain something else?”

Jan Olieslagers walked across the room with large strides.

“Openly stated—yes!—

Didn’t you say that this type of internment is an ancient custom of your family?”

“Yes.”

“And that under any circumstances you would accord Stanislawa this honor?”

“Most certainly!”

“Why then, in all the world, did she have you twice swear an oath and in such a solemn way about something that is so self-evident?”

The Count took the photo and looked at it for a long time.

“My guilt,” he said, “my huge guilt—come, sit down and I will explain it to you —

See, the Countess believed in my love for her. Then, when this love was denied for the first time, when she requested something great from me, it was as if she fell into an abyss. When I refused her request, what she asked me that night, she wouldn’t believe it, and thought that I was only joking. She was so convinced that my love would do what she requested. And when she finally saw how weak I was, and how I could not let her go; then she lost the single thing in which she believed; then a strange transformation happened to her. It seems that I had taken her reason for living, and she slowly disappeared into the abyss, like a shadow, when the sun sets.

I believe that I understand that much.

For months she never left her room. She sat on her balcony, silent and dreaming, looking out at the tall trees. During this time she hardly spoke with me; she didn’t complain; it was as if all day long she was brooding over some secret. Once I met her in the library; she was lying on the floor and searching eagerly through all kinds of books. But I don’t know what she was reading. She asked me to leave. Then she wrote a lot, a few letters every day; and soon packages came from everywhere. The first just contained only books; I don’t know what kind of books. She had them

locked away and then burned just before her death. But I know that they all dealt with toxicology. She studied them eagerly. Through entire nights I wandered around the park and saw the dim glow of her lighted window. Then she wrote again, and this time small, strange boxes came, mostly sent registered and as test samples. They bore the name of the senders: It was Merck in Darmstadt and Heusser in Zürich and other known poison manufacturers. I was seized with a great fear; I feared that she wanted to poison me. Finally I seized my heart and asked her. She laughed at that:

"Die? No, it is not about dying! It is just—makeup for preserving myself better!"

I felt that she was telling the truth, and yet her answer didn't satisfy me. Twice packages came, that had to be picked up in the city at the customs office. I asked whether I was permitted to pick them up myself. I believed that she would refuse, but she answered lightly:

"Why not! Go get them!"

—One of the boxes, gave off an extraordinarily pungent, but not unpleasant odor, and contained an extract of bitter almonds; the other, which came from Prague, was a shiny bowl, which was made from what is called porcelain. I know that she used this bowl; she was occupied with it for hours every day, and then set it aside for months. And it is certain that this strange makeup was to thank, that her face, even though terribly ravaged by tuberculosis, still retained its old beauty. Her features became rigid, like those of a mask, unmoving and always the same; but she remained just as beautiful and pure up until her death bed. Death itself was not able to transform her."

He handed the photo back to his friend.

"All of this seems to me, as proof, of how very broken she was from this life. Nothing interested her any more, and of you, excuse me, she spoke

not a single word. Only her own beautiful body, which she now realized would soon be destroyed in a short time, appeared worth her interest. And she scarcely paid any attention to me, now that her belief in my love had been extinguished. Yes, it even seemed to me sometimes as if her glance was lit with a wild hatred, much worse, much more horrible, than the one she had tormented me with earlier—Is it any wonder that she didn't trust me? Those who lose their faith in a Saint, will soon renounce the crucified one and even the most sacred virgin!—I believe that is why she made me swear this strange oath!"

But Jan Olieslagers was not satisfied.

"That could be," he said, "It explains the problem of your love. But it does not in the slightest explain her strange desire to be interred in your castle chapel."

"She was a Countess d'Ault-Onival—"

"Ach, yet still, she was also Lea Lewi, who called herself Stanislawa d'Asp! And she should suddenly have such a yearning for the urns of you feudal ancestors?"

"But you can see that is what it is and nothing else!"

The Fleming took the last will and testament again and observed it from all sides. He read through it once more and then again, but he couldn't find a single thing wrong with it.

"Well then," he said, "I don't understand it."

Jan Olieslagers had to wait four days in the castle of Ronval. Every day tortured him; they should proceed with the internment.

"But it won't do," said the Count, "you can see how cloudy the heavens are."

Every letter of the last will and testament was a strict law to him.

Finally, on the afternoon of the fifth day the clouds disappeared. The Fleming persisted and the Count gave his consent. Not one of the servants was permitted to leave the castle, only the old gardener and his two helpers with shovels and spades. They went through the park that surrounded the quiet chapel. The sun shone on the black cracks in the old chapel, played on the white, nodding birches and threw fleeting shadows of their features on the smooth path. They stepped through the open door; the Count took a drop of holy water from out of the basin and crossed himself. The people lifted the heavy stone lid, and then climbed down into the tomb. There in rows and ranks on both sides were the large red urns with the coat of arms of the Count d'Ault-Onival. They were capped with high crowns and each bore a heavy copper plate with the name and dates of the deceased on a silver chain around the neck.

In the back stood several large, empty urns. The Count silently pointed at one; the people took it and carried it out of the tomb. They went out of the chapel, and walked through the graves between the birches. A dozen mighty stone covers lay there; they bore the names of loyal servants of the Counts family, whose rest they still guarded, even in death, from all sides. But the grave of the Countess bore no stone; there, in high majesty, blossomed hundreds of deep red roses.

The gardener carefully went to his work. With deep cuts they removed the entire upper surface, carefully lifted it out with all the rooted roses and placed it to the side, next to the urn. To the Fleming it seemed as if the living skin had been removed from the grave, a torn out rose fell to the ground here and there like drops of blood.

Then the black earth lay exposed and the people dug. Jan Olieslagers took the Count's arm:

"Come; let's walk around for a while."

But the Count shook his head; he would not leave the grave for even one minute. The other could do that by himself. He wandered slowly around the pond, from time to time he stepped back under the birches. It seemed to him as if the gardener was taking a terribly long time; the minutes crawled by. He went into the east garden, picked some currants and gooseberries; and then searched among the flowers for the later maturing strawberries.

When he came back he saw two of the people standing up to their shoulders in the grave; then it went more quickly. He saw a coffin lying between them; with both hands they removed the last traces of moist earth from it. It was a black coffin, richly decorated with silver; but the silver had long since become tarnished and the wood was spongy and sticky, strongly stuck together from the warm moistness of the ground. The Count took a white silk cloth from out of his pocket and gave it to the gardener; so he could collect the bones in it. The two others removed the screws; there was a horrible grating sound, when the tool slipped. But most of them were loose enough in the rotted wood that they could be turned out with the fingers. Then they lifted the lid a little, pushed a rope under it and tied it solidly. One jumped out of the grave and helped the old man lift up the cover.

At a wave from the Count the other took off the white sheet that covered the corpse, and then a second cloth, that only covered the head.

There lay Stanislawa d'Asp—*and she lay there, as if she were lying on her death bed.*

The long lace dress, that covered her entire body, appeared moist and showed black and red spots. But her delicate hands, as if formed from wax, rested upon her breast, and tightly held a crucifix. And her face itself had changed just as little. She didn't lie there like one living—and yet, didn't give the impression of death either. She looked like a wax doll, formed from

an artist's hand. Her lips didn't breathe, but she smiled. And she showed a faint red color, on her cheeks, on the lobes of her ears, from which two large pearls hung.

But the pearls were dead.

The Count held onto a birch trunk, and then set himself heavily on the high heap of thrown out earth. But Jan Olieslagers was in the grave with a leap. He bent down and scratched a cheek softly with his finger nail. It made a soft, light sound, as if he touched old porcelain.

"Come up," said the Count, "what are you doing?"

"I have determined that the Prague porcelain makeup of your Countess is an excellent thing; they should give it to every coquette that wants to still look like a nymph at eighty years old!"

His voice sounded crude, almost hateful.

The Count jumped up and stepped right to the edge of the grave.

"I forbid you to speak that way!—by all the saints, don't you see that the woman did this for me?—and for you as well—for both of us!—we are supposed to see her again, beautiful like she was—even in death!"

The Fleming bit his lips together. He hesitated, but gulped back his words.

Then he said dryly:

"That's good; we have seen her—now close the lid again and cover the grave."

But the Count attacked him with words:

"Are you a fool? Did you forget that she has to be interred?"

"This woman does not deserve to rest in the chapel of the Count d'Ault-Onival."

He spoke calmly, but commandingly, every word stressed. The Count was beside himself:

“That, you say that—at the grave of this woman? This woman, whose love transcends the grave—”

“Her love?—Her hate!”

“Her love, I say! She was a saint—”

Then the Fleming shouted in the Count’s face with a loud voice:

“She was the most infamous prostitute in all of France!”

The Count cracked; he seized a spade and swung it in the air. But before he could hit his friend, the gardener grabbed him.

“Let go!” he bellowed. “Let go!”

The Fleming didn’t lose his composure.

“Just wait a minute,” he said. “Then you can strike me dead if you want to.”

He bent down, opened the button from around her throat and tore the dress from the body of the deceased.

“There Vincenz, look there!”

The Count looked down into the grave enraptured. The slender naked arms lay in front of her, extending from her infinitely fine neck, resting there on the small, white childish breasts. And her lips smiled, always smiled, appearing to invite him to a honeymoon’s lust—

He knelt down at the edge of the grave, folded his hands and closed his eyes.

“Dear God in heaven, I thank you, for once more allowing me to see this image.”

Jan Olieslagers threw the sheet back over the corpse. He climbed out of the grave and laid his hands on his friend’s shoulders.

“Come Vincenz, now we will go back into the castle.”

The Count shook his head.

“You go, if you want—I must inter her.”

At that the Fleming squeezed his arm with all his strength.

“Will you finally wake up Vincenz! Don’t you understand yet?—How will you do it—inter her?”

The Count stared at him without comprehending, then the other continued:

“There is your urn—and its neck is quite narrow. And there lays the Countess—”

The Count paled.

“I must inter her,” he said tonelessly.

“But you can’t inter her.”

“I have sworn it.”

The words rang dully:

“I have sworn it. I must do it, what remains of her, today before sundown and bring it in the urn into the chapel. That is what it says in her last will and testament. I have sworn it on the crucifix.”

“But you can’t do it, by the devil, you can’t do it.”

“I must do it. I am compelled by two sacred oaths.”

The Fleming burst out:

“And if you had sworn a hundred thousand oaths, you still can’t do it. Not unless you want to cut her body up into little pieces—”

The Count cried, his fingers tightened around the arm of his friend:

“What—what did you say?”

To appease, in order to ward off the thought that had jumped into his brain, he answered the other:

“Well yes, nothing else is possible.—and that was her intention—what she wanted with her—last will and testament.”

He put an arm around his friend’s shoulder.

“I beg you, Vincenz, come now.”

The Count let himself be led like a drunkard, but only for a couple of steps.

He remained standing there, and then tore himself loose. He scarcely opened his mouth, so softly he spoke.

It was her intention—and it must be carried out; I have sworn it."

And the Fleming could sense that now he had to remain silent, that any words were now useless.

The Count turned around; his gaze fell on the red sun that lay deep in the west.

"Before sundown," he cried. "Before sundown! It's almost here!"

He went up to the gardener.

"Do you have a knife?"

The old man took a knife out of his pocket.

"Is it sharp?"

"Yes, Herr Count."

"So go and cut her up."

The old man looked at him in terror. He hesitated, but then he said:

"No, Herr Count, I can't do it."

The Count turned to the two other fellows.

"So you do it."

But they remained standing, lowering their eyes and not moving.

"I command you to do it. Do you hear me?"

They remained silent.

"You are fired from service today, if you don't obey."

Then the old man said:

"Herr, excuse me, I can't do it. I have been at the castle for fifty four years and—"

The Count cut his words off:

“I will give a thousand francs to whoever does it.”

They didn’t move.

“Ten thousand francs.”

No answer.

“Twenty thousand.”

The youngest of the fellows, the one that still stood in the grave, looked up at the Count.

“Will you take all responsibility Herr?”

“Yes!”

“With the judge?”

“Yes!”

“With the priest?”

“Yes, yes!”

“Give me the knife old man, and hand me the ax! I will do it!”

He took the knife and threw the cloth away. He bent down and lifted his arm. But then he jumped up, and threw the knife into the sand.

“No, no!” he screamed. “She’s laughing at me.”

With a leap he was out of the grave and ran through the bushes with long strides.

The Count turned to his friend:

“Do you believe that you loved her more than I?”

“No, most certainly not.”

“Then you can do it easier than I can.”

But the Fleming shrugged his shoulders.

“I am no butcher—and besides—that was not her only intention.”

The spittle dropped from the Count’s mouth. And yet his lips were dry, foul, and pale as a sheet. It sounded like the last question of a condemned

man, pleading, imploring:

"Her intention was—that I—I, myself—?"

No answer came. He looked toward the west. The blood red sun sank ever deeper.

"I must, I must, I have sworn it."

Then he jumped into the grave. His hands clenched:

"Holy Mother of God give me the strength."

He raised the axe and swung it high over his head; he closed his eyes and let it swing down with all its weight.

The swing was bad. The blade stuck in the rotten wood, splintering it, tearing it to the ground.

And the Countess smiled.

The old gardener turned away; hesitated at first, then ran off as quickly as he could. The other fellow followed at his heels. Jan Olieslagers looked after them, and then left as well, slowly, step by step, back to the castle.

Count Vincenz d'Ault-Onival was alone. He hesitated, wanted to scream, to call after the others. But something closed his lips. And the sun sank and sank—it called to him—he heard it calling.

And the Countess smiled at his feet.

But it was this smile that gave him the power. He kneeled down and picked up the knife from the earth. His hand trembled, but he pushed it, pushed it into the neck of the one he loved, loved more than anything in the world.

Then it was as if a freedom came over him and a great laughter. He laughed so loudly, so shrilly within the still evening, that the branches of the birch trembled, turned back and forth in deathly fear. It was as if they sighed and sobbed, longed to get away from this horrible place. Yet they

couldn't, had to remain, had to watch and listen, held solidly by mighty roots—

Jan Olieslagers remained standing there by the pond. He heard this laugh and laughter, that had no end, heard the axe fall and cleave and the knife cutting. He wanted to go, but it held him fast, as if he were rooted there, like the birches. His hearing became impossibly sharp and through the loud laughter he believed that he heard the bones breaking, the sinews snapping and the muscles tearing—

But meanwhile—another sound, soft, silvery, as if from the lips of a woman. What was that?

Then again—and again—it was worse than the sound of the axe, worse than the lunatic laughter of the Count.

It came again and again—more often and more clearly—only, what was it?

And then suddenly, he knew what it was: *the laugh of the Countess.*

He screamed out loud, jumped into the bushes. He stuck his fingers in his ears, opened his mouth and laughed softly, in order to stifle all other sounds. Then he cowered there, like a wounded wild thing, not daring to stop this animalistic laugh, not daring to take his hands away from his head. He tore his eyes wide open, staring out across the path, to the steps, to the open door of the chapel—

Motionless, unmoving.

He waited, breathless; but he knew this fear must come to an end. When the last shadows lost themselves in the elm trees—when the sun finally set—

The shadows became longer and longer, he watched them grow. And with them his courage grew. Then he dared it: He closed his lips. He didn't hear anything. He let his arms fall. Nothing.

It was quiet, everything was completely quiet. But he still remained standing there, waiting in the concealing branches. Then he heard steps, nearer and nearer—right to the side. And he saw, in the deep glowing red of the setting sun, the Count Vincenz d'Ault-Onival go by. He was not laughing anymore; but on his rigid face lay a single, unduly satisfied smile. As if he had just played a wonderful, immense joke.

With strong, firm steps he walked over the path, in his highly raised arms was a heavy, red urn. He carried the remains of his great love into the tomb of his ancestors.

Mamaloi

I received the following letter:

Petit Goaves (Haiti).
August 16, 1906.

Dear Sir:

You see, I am keeping my promise. I shall write down everything as you requested, from the very beginning. Do with it as you wish, only don't use my own name for the sake of my relatives. I would like to spare them another scandal; the previous one was a sufficient strain upon their nerves. Here, as you desired, you will find, to begin with, a very simple story of my life. I came here as a young man of twenty years, to join a German firm in Jeremie. You know that the Germans have almost the entire colonial trade in their hands. The salary tempted me—one hundred and fifty dollars per month—and I saw myself already a millionaire. Well, I went the way of all young men who come to this loveliest and vilest of all countries on earth: horses, women, drinking and gambling. Only few are able to tear themselves away; I myself was saved only by my strong constitution. There was no thought of getting on; I lay around for months at a stretch in the German hospital at Port-au-Prince. At one time I did an excellent business with the government; at home, to be sure, they would call it an incredibly impudent swindle. There they would have me in jail for three years; here I rose to high honors. All in all, if I had received the punishment provided for by the German statutes, for what I and the others did, I would have to live five hundred years to be a free man again. But I would gladly serve them if you could point out to me one man of my age in this country who has not an equal score to account for. To be sure, even at home, a modern judge would have to let us go scot free, for we all lack a consciousness of our acts: on

the contrary, we look upon our deeds as not only permissible but extremely honest.

Well then, with the construction of the pier at Port-au-Prince— which, of course, was never built—I laid the foundation of my fortune; I shared my booty with a few ministers. Today I own one of the most successful enterprises on the island, and am a very rich man. I barter—or swindle, as you say—with everything imaginable, live in a beautiful villa, promenade in marvelous gardens and drink with the officers of the Hamburg-American liners whenever they call at this port. Thank God, I have neither wife nor child. You, of course, may call the mulatto bastards that run loose in my courtyard my children simply because I begot them—may the Lord keep you and your morals!—but I don't. In fine, I feel excellent.

For years I had a miserable nostalgia. Forty years I had been away from Germany—you understand. I resolved to sell my entire holdings for better or for worse, and to spend my declining days in the old country. When I had made my resolution, my longing became suddenly so strong that I could hardly wait for my departure. As a result, I postponed the sale of my property, and with a neat sum of money tucked away, departed helter skelter to spend six months over there.

Well, I stood it three weeks, and, if I had tarried another day, the district attorney would have had to provide shelter for another five years. That was the scandal I referred to above. "Another Case Sternberg," the Berlin papers wrote, and my highly honorable family saw their name printed in bold face underneath it. I shall never forget the last interview I had with my brother. The poor man is privy councilor! The face he made when I assured him quite innocently that the girls were at least eleven and possibly twelve years of age! The more I tried to whitewash myself, the deeper I got into the mire. When I finally told him that it really was not so bad and that here in Haiti

we prefer the girls even younger, else we would have to be content with sickly specimens and not virgins at all, he stroked his forehead and murmured:

"Be silent, wretched brother, be silent. My eyes look into a cesspool of indescribable filth."

For three years he raged at me, and I secured his forgiveness only because I bequeathed to each one of his eleven children a considerable sum, and also because I sent him a monthly allowance for his sons. For this he includes me every Sunday in his prayers. Whenever I write him I never fail to mention the fact that another young lady of my neighborhood has reached the convenient age of eight and has enjoyed my favor. I ask him to pray for me, old sinner that I am. Let's hope it helps! Once he wrote me that he had to struggle with his conscience to accept money from such an incorrigible man; often he was about to send it back: only his consideration and pity for his only brother persuaded him to keep it finally. But now, suddenly, the scales had fallen from his eyes, and he knew that I had been always joking. For now I was ninety-six years of age and for that reason incapable of similar misdeeds. But he begged me insistently to refrain from similar jokes in the future.

I answered him; here is a copy of my letter, which I, as a good business man, kept:

"My dear brother:

Your letter has deeply offended my pride. Under separate cover I am sending you a package of the bark and leaves of the *toluwanga*- tree, which an old negro provides regularly for me every week. The fellow claims to be one hundred and sixty years of age—well, he certainly is a hundred and ten. In any case—thanks to the excellent extract prepared from this bark—he is

the stoutest Don Juan of the entire countryside, barring only your brother. The latter, incidentally, is still quite sure of his natural prowess and uses the precious solution only on rare occasions. For this reason he is readily able to grant you part of his store and guarantees its prompt effect. The day after tomorrow, in honor of your birthday, he will arrange a small banquet, and on this occasion he proposes to outdo himself, which is a general practice on memorable days. At the same time he will drink to your health.

Enclosed, as a little extra for the coming Christmas, find a check for $3000 (three thousand dollars). With my best regards for you and yours, I am,

Your faithful brother."

"P.S. Please inform me if you remembered me in your prayers on Christmas."ω

Probably my good brother had another serious battle with his conscience, but eventually Christian pity for me, poor sinner, must have conquered in his heart. At any rate he kept the check.

I really don't know what else I should tell you about my life, my dear sir. I could tell you a hundred little adventures and jokes, but they would probably be of exactly the same nature as you heard from every white man, when you traversed our country.

As I re-read this missive, it occurs to me that three-quarters of what I had intended to be a *curriculum vitae* is devoted to the theme "woman";—well, that probably is characteristic of the writer. After all, what interesting thing could I have said about my horses, my merchandise or my wines? And poker I gave up a long time ago. In this village I am the only white man, aside from the Hamburg-American Line agent, and he plays no more than the officers of his line who occasionally call on me.

There remains woman—what will you? So, now, I shall place this letter in the booklet which is to contain the notes you desired of me, and of which I still have no idea myself. Who knows, then, whether you ever will get it, or if you do—perhaps in an empty booklet?

I salute you, kind sir, and am, Yours very truly, F. X.

The letter is followed by these notes:

August 18.

As I open this empty booklet, I have a feeling as though something new were entering my life. What? The young doctor who visited with me for three days made me promise to investigate a mystery and embark upon a strange adventure; a mystery which, perhaps, does not even exist, and an adventure which may be alive in his imagination only. And I promised so lightly—but I am afraid he will be disappointed.

To be sure, he surprised me. Five months he strolled around in this land of ours and knows it much better than I myself, even though I have been here for fifty years. He told me a thousand things which I had never heard, or else which I had heard and put aside incredulously. Probably I would have paid as little attention to his stories, if he had not extracted from me, by his questions, all kinds of things which were never quite clear to me and which suddenly appeared to me in an entirely new light. And yet, I would have forgotten all that presently, if it hadn't been for the little incident with Adelaide.

What happened? Well, the negro girl—she is the most beautiful and the strongest of all my servants and really my favorite ever since she came into my house—was laying the tea table for us. Suddenly the doctor interrupted the conversation and looked at her attentively. After she was gone he asked

me whether I had noticed the small silver ring with the black stone on the thumb of her right hand. I had seen the ring a thousand times, but had never paid any attention to it. Had I seen another one like it on another girl's hand? Well, perhaps; but I could not remember. He shook his head thoughtfully.

When the girl came once more to serve tea on the verandah, the doctor without looking at her, hummed a few notes; an absurd melody with a few stupid negro words, none of which I could understand:

Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio tè
Cango mount dè lè
Cango do ki la
Cango li!

Crash! The tea board lay on the stone floor, cans and cups shattered to pieces. With a shriek the girl ran from the house. The doctor stared after her; then he laughed and said:

"I give you my word, she is a mamaloi."

We chatted till midnight, until the steam siren called him back on board ship. While I took him back in my boat he almost succeeded in convincing me that I was living like a blindman in a most extraordinary world of horror, the existence of which till then was utterly unknown tome.

Well, I have sharpened my eyes and ears. So far, nothing odd has occurred to me. I am very curious to read the books the doctor proposed to send me from New York. As a matter of fact, I agreed with him perfectly when he said that it is a shame that, in all these years, I haven't read a single book about this country. I didn't even know that such books existed: I never came across one at the house of a friend.

August 27.

Once more Adelaide is away for a week to visit her parents in the interior. She really is the only native girl in whom I ever noticed such a pronounced attachment to her parents. I believe she would run away if I did not give her the desired vacation. For days before she is quite unbalanced, and when she returns, the sorrow of parting always works so severely upon her that she actually breaks down under the strain of her duties. Think of it: a colored girl! Incidentally, I have searched her room during her absence; quite methodically. I prepared myself for the task by reading up on it in a detective story. I found nothing, absolutely nothing suspicious. The only one of her possessions which was not obvious from the very beginning was a black, rounded, oblong stone, lying on a plate bathed in oil. I think she uses it for massaging; all these girls massage their bodies.

September 4.

The books from New York have arrived; I want to start reading immediately. There are three German, three English and five French works, some of them illustrated. Adelaide has returned. She is so miserable that she had to go to bed immediately. But, I know her; in a few days she will be all right again.

September 17.

If only one-tenth of what these books contain is true, it is really worth while to pursue the secret which the doctor thinks is so close to me. But these travellers simply must make themselves interesting, so that one copies the rankest idiocies from the other. I am really such a blind ass that never, in all these years, have I noticed anything of the entire voodoo cult, with its veneration of the snake and its thousand human sacrifices. A few small

things did occur to me occasionally, but I never paid any attention to them. I must try to remember everything which might have some connection with voodooism.

Once my old housekeeper—I was living in Gonaives then— refused to buy pork in the market. It might be human flesh, she claimed. I laughed at her and reminded her of the fact that she bought pork all year round.

"Yes, but never at Easter-time!"

I could not convince her, and had to send another girl to the market. I have also seen these *caprelates* quite frequently *hougons* they are called in this vicinity—decrepit old men who sell *wanges*. These are small bags with shells and multi-colored stones which are worn as amulets. They are divided into distinctive types, such as "points"ש which render men invulnerable; and for women there are "chances" which secure possession of the naked body of the beloved. But I never knew that these swindlers—or rather, these merchants—are a kind of low clergy of the voodoo cult. Nor did I ever realize that many foodstuffs are taboo for members of the cult. Thus Adelaide never touches tomatoes or *aubergines*, nor will she eat the meat of goats or turtles. On the other hand, she has often said that the meat of a ram is blessed, and blessed also is the *maiskassan*, her beloved corn-bread. I also have learned that twins are greeted with jubilation everywhere; there is always a family banquet when a woman or an ass gets *marassas*.

But, good Heaven, the story of human flesh on the market is certainly a fable; as for the rest, it all seems utterly harmless to me. Small superstitions; where on the entire earth won't you find something similar?

September 19.

So far as Adelaide is concerned, the doctor seems to be right after all, provided that his knowledge is not simply book knowledge. The

Englishman, Spencer St. John, does mention a similar ring; it is supposed to be worn by the *mamaloi*, the priestess of the voodoo. Incidentally, I will confess that this term and the analogous one for the chief male priest are in much better taste than I would have believed these negroes capable of using: *papaloi, mamaloi* in their corrupted French the *loi*, of course, stands for *roi*, or king. Can you think of a more beautiful title? Mother and queen —father and king. Does not that sound better than privy councilor, as my God-fearing brother calls himself? I also found mention in the books of the stone which I thought she used for massage. Tippenhauer, as well as St. Mery, knew it. Wonderful! I have a real god in my house; the fellow is called *Damtala*! In her absence I inspected it; the descriptions tally absolutely. It is obviously an old, marvelously well-sharpened axe of the time of the *caraibs*. The negroes find it in the forest, and, unable to explain its origin, think it is a god. They put it on a plate and believe it knows the future and talks by rattling. To keep it in good humor, it gets an oil bath every Friday. I find this utterly charming, and my secret priestess pleases me more from day to day. To be sure, there are still secrets to be fathomed —the doctor is quite right—but there is nothing horrible about it!

September 23.

Now, in my seventieth year, I am forced to realize that it is well to educate yourself in all fields. I would never have had that charming adventure I experienced yesterday if I hadn't studied those books.

I was drinking my tea on the verandah, and called for Adelaide, who had forgotten the sugar. She did not come. I looked in my room, in the kitchen; she wasn't there, nor were the other girls. Moreover, I could not find the sugar. As I walked through the

foyer, I heard murmurs in her room. I rushed to the garden—her room is on the ground floor—and looked in. There my pretty black priestess was sitting, wiping the stone with her best silk kerchief, putting it back on the plate and carefully pouring fresh oil over it. She seemed very excited; her eyes were full of tears. Carefully she took the plate between two fingers, at the same time extending her arm. Then her arm began to tremble, slowly at first and then faster. Naturally the stone began to rattle. Adelaide talked to it but, unfortunately, I could not understand a word.

But now I am getting somewhere. Fine! The doctor may yet be satisfied. And I, too; for, fundamentally, this is flattering to me. That evening, before dinner, I went to her room, took the talking stone and sat down in my easy chair. When she came in to remove the plates, I quickly put my newspaper aside, took the plate and poured fresh oil over the stone. The effect was remarkable. Crash! went the tray, an habitual occurrence at such moments. Thank God, it was empty this time. I motioned her to be still and said quietly:

"Friday! He must have a fresh bath today!"

"You want to ask him?" she whispered.

"Naturally!"

"About me?"

"Of course!"

All this came about very conveniently; now I would certainly learn her secret. I waved at her to leave the room and to close the door behind her. She obeyed, but I could plainly hear her waiting outside and listening. Now I made the god clatter to its heart's content. It skipped about on the oiled plate so merrily that it really was a joy to watch it. The clacking mingled with Adelaide's sighs from behind the door.

As soon as I let the thunder god subside and put down the plate, she slunk in again.

“What did he say?”

Exactly!—The devil, what did he say? He clattered, and nothing else. So I remained silent.

“What did he say?” she insisted. “Yes, or no?”

“Yes.” I said, making a wild guess.

She was jubilant.

“*Petit moune*? *Petit moune*?”

In the Haitian Creole this stands for *petit monde*, which means “little world”, or rather, “little child”.

“Naturally, *petit moune*,” I repeated.

She jumped around the room, hopping from one leg to the other.

“Oh, he is so good, the dear thunder god! He told me so, too. And now he must keep his promise since he pronounced it twice in one day!”

Suddenly she became quite serious again.

“What did he say, a boy or a girl?”

“A boy,” I answered.

At this she fell on her knees before me, crying and sobbing again and again, almost swooning in her joy.

“At last! At last!”

September 28.

I know that Adelaide has loved me for a long time and that she wishes for nothing else so much as a *petit moune* from me. She is jealous of the other girls whose brats run around in the courtyard, although, God knows, I don’t bother with any of them. I think she would love to scratch their eyes out. So that is the reason why she treated the thunder god so nicely!

Incidentally, tonight she was particularly charming, and it seems to me that I have never had so sweet a colored girl. I believe I actually like her a lot, and, so far as I am concerned, everything shall be done to fulfill her little wish.

October 6.

It is scandalous that I, as a good business man, have never kept account of the extent to which I have contributed toward the betterment of this wretched people. Apparently I have always greatly underestimated my cultural achievements. Today I brought the statistics up to date; it was not very difficult. You know, my thumb has three joints and this is said to be hereditary. In other words, anybody in the village with three joints in his thumb is certainly one of my offspring. In connection with this I made an amusing discovery, so far as little Leon is concerned. I always took the mulatto boy for one of my progeny, and his mother, too, swears to this. But the brat has only two joints in his thumb. Something is wrong here. I suspect handsome Christian, one of the Hamburg—American Line officers; he must have competed with me. As a matter of fact, not less than four of my offspring are missing. Some say they ran away years ago; but nobody is able to tell me anything definite. It is really so unimportant.

October 24.

The clatter-god was right. Adelaide is bewitched, and full of a honeymoon tenderness which is almost disquieting. Her pride and her joy seem contagious; never in all my life have I bothered about the progress of a future pilgrim on earth; while now—what's the use denying it?—I find myself keenly interested. On top of that comes the closer relationship which has sprung up between Adelaide and me. To be sure there was some

resistance and hesitancy, as well as much weeping and coaxing, until I finally won her entire trust. These blacks certainly can be silent if they want to; what they won't divulge you can't get out of them even with red-hot pliers.

Here, again, a particularly happy coincidence provided the means whereby I forced her to remove her last mask.

Adelaide has no parents after all! I learned it from an old woman by the name of Phylloxera, who has weeded my garden these past years. She is a shrivelled old hag who lives with her great-grandchild—a dirty, lousy brat—in a tumbleâ—down shanty in the neighborhood. Once again the little scamp had stolen eggs in my house and faced a severe whipping. Then the old woman came to beg me off. In return she offered me information about Adelaide, since, of course, she too had noticed in what high favor Adelaide stood. And her information—I had to swear by all saints that I would not betray the old hen—was really so interesting that I gave her an American dollar on top of it. Adelaide has no parents and, therefore, could not have visited them. She is a *mamaloi*, a priestess—queen of the voodoo cult. Whenever she took leave, it was for the purpose of rushing to the *honfoû*, the temple situated far away on a little clearing in the woods. And there my little tender Adelaide plays the part of a cruel priestess, invokes the holy snake, chokes children, drinks rum like an old ship's captain and manages unheard of orgies! Small wonder that she always returns home utterly exhausted. Well! You just wait, you little *canaille*!

October 26.

I announced that I was riding to Sâle-Trou and had my horse saddled. The old woman had given me approximate directions to the temple, as well as a negro woman can give directions. Naturally, I lost my way, and had the

pleasure of staying over night in the primeval forest. Fortunately I carried a hammock with me. Not until the next morning did I find the *honfoû*-temple, a large, miserable straw hut upon a clearing which had been stamped and smoothed like a dance floor. A rough path led to the temple, and, on both sides, I noticed stakes driven into the earth and adorned alternately with the cadavers of black and white chickens. Between the stakes there were blown-out turkey eggs and grotesquely shaped stones and roots. A big strawberry tree—called *loco*, and held sacred by the believers—stood at the entrance to the temple; and around it were heaped shattered glasses, plates and bottles in its honor.

I entered the room. A few holes in the roof gave sufficient light. Underneath one of them, fastened to a pillar, was a burned-down pitch torch. The interior decorations of the temple were very gay. Against the walls I saw pictures of Bismarck and King Edward VII. from an illustrated weekly. Both of them most assuredly came from me. Who else would have subscribed to the "*Woche*"ש and to the "Illustrated London News"? Probably Adelaide had generously bequeathed them. In addition there were a few pictures of saints,—horrible oil prints depicting St. Sebastian, St. Francis and Mother Mary—and, next to them, cartoons from "*Simplizissimus*"ש (mine too!) and from "*L'Assiette au Beurre*."ש In between hung a few old flag-rags, chains of shells and multi-colored paper garlands. In the background, somewhat higher up, I noticed a heavy basket. Ah, I thought, that's where *Hougonbadagri*, the great voodoo god, is hidden! Very carefully I opened the cover and jumped back: I had no particular desire to be bitten by some poisonous reptile. But oh! To be sure, there was a snake in the basket, but only a harmless one; and starved to death besides! That is typically negro; to pray to something as divine and then completely forget it when the festival is over! Naturally a reserve god

could be easily procured in the woods. Anyway, *Damtala*, the good clatter-god, was decidedly better off than the almighty *Houedosobagui* lying miserably shrivelled and dead before me. The former gets oil every Friday, while the latter, who holds the place of John the Baptist in this crazy heathen—Christian voodoo cult, does not even get a little frog or a mouse!

October 29.

When I displayed my new wisdom before Adelaide the next day—I acted as if I had known everything for a long time—she did not even attempt any longer to lie. I told her that the doctor had informed me, he who was a messenger of *Cimbi-Kita*, the head devil. And I showed her an axe over which I had poured some red ink. An axe drenched in blood is the symbol of this devil.

The girl trembled, swallowed hard and could barely be quieted.

"I knew it," she shouted. "I knew it! And I also told the *papaloi* about it. He is *Dom Pèdre* himself."

I confirmed it—why shouldn't the good doctor be *Dom Pèdre* himself? Now I learned that our own village, Petit Goaves, was the headquarters of the devil-sect of *Dom Pèdre*. That was a man—and a nice swindler he must have been!—who came over a long time ago from the Spanish part of the island, and founded here the cult of *Cimbi-Kita*, the great devil, and his knight, *Azilit*. He must have made a great deal of money out of it. But he himself and all of his greater and lesser devils may fetch me alive, if I don't make a nice business out of this story. I have an idea already.

November 18.

Today I heard the *néklésin*, the iron triangle, howl through the streets. How often I had heard this childish music before and never thought

anything of it! Only now do I know that it is the gruesome signal calling the believers to the temple. I called my little *mamaloi* immediately and informed her that this time I would participate in the rites. She was beside herself; begged and entreated, cried and shrieked. But I did not give in. Again I showed her the old wooden axe with the red ink, which almost froze her with terror. I told her that I was specifically instructed by *Dom Pèdre* and that everything would have to be done as usual. She left me to talk with her *houcibossales*, the tattooed voodoo people. I think she is there now; and the *papaloi* himself, too.

I used her absence to read another few chapters of my books; I have here collected a few dates which probably are trustworthy.

Apparently, Toussaint Louverture, the liberator of Haiti, was a *papaloi* himself, as were Emperor Dessalines and King Christophe. Emperor Soulouque was a voodoo priest; I knew the black rotter when I first came to Port-au-Prince in 1858. And President Salnave, my good friend Salnave, in 1868 introduced the human sacrifice in person—the sacrifice of the "hornless he-goat". Salnave! Who would have thought it? The very knave with whom I—in the same year—did not build the pier in Port-au-Paix, which laid the foundation of my fortune. Then came President Salomon, the aged idiot, who was a pious disciple of voodoo. That Hippolyte, his successor, was little less so, I had often heard, but that he preserved as memories the skeletons of his victims is a particularly nice trait about him. When he died ten years ago, they found quite a number of these skeletons in his rooms. He might have left me some of them. I had closed many a good transaction with him—always fifty-fifty—and, besides that, he got all his uniforms free from me, with all the golden tinsel he could wish for! And all the *kapypsos* came out of my pocket, too; and he never had to spend a centime for small tips for the gentlemen and deputies.

On the other hand, the two presidents of the sixties and seventies, Geffrard and Boisrond-Canal, were opposed to the voodoo cult. The very two with whom it was so difficult to do business! In their days, too, fell the trials against the voodoo people. In 1864 eight persons were shot to death in Port-au-Prince because they had sacrificed and eaten a twelve-year-old girl. And, in 1876, a *papaloi* was sentenced to death, and, two years later, a number of women. That is not very much, if, as Texier has it, a thousand children—*cabrits sans cornes* —were slaughtered and eaten every year. Adelaide has not returned yet. But I shall insist upon my wish under all circumstances. I belong to this country, and have the right to know it in all its peculiarities.

10 P. M.

The *papaloi* has sent an emissary, an *avalou*—sort of a sacristan—who pleaded for an interview in behalf of his master. I sent him away and refused to listen to anything. Before he left, I showed him my ink-spattered axe, which did not fail to make the desired impression. I notified the *papaloi* that I would shoot him down if he did not live up to my wishes.

At nine o'clock the fellow returned once more to bargain; incidentally, he was filled with a wholesome awe and did not even dare to enter my room. In the name of *Cimba-Kita*, the head devil, I did some tall cursing. This man, at least, is as certain of my devilish mission as Adelaide herself! She has not returned yet and I am positive she is being held. I told the *avalou* that, together with *Dom Pèdre* himself, I would call for her if she weren't home within an hour.

Midnight.

Everything is arranged! The expedition can start tomorrow. The *papaloi* probably realized that I was not to be moved from my purpose, and therefore he gave in. True priest that he was, he still tried to secure something for himself and, through Adelaide, made the condition that I donate twenty dollars for the poor of the community—"the poor"—meant himself, of course! So I sent him the money immediately. Now the black privy councilor will probably be satisfied.

In return he sent me a handful of rotten plants which I was to use for a bath in order to be ordained and become a *canzou*. One really is expected to squat forty days in this mud bath until it has completely evaporated; but a shorter method was permitted me. I threw the stuff out, of course, but, for Adelaide's sake, I ate the second gift—*verver*, a mixture of corn and blood. It tasted abominably. Now I am sufficiently purified to be accepted tomorrow night among the devil priests, the *bizangos* and *quinbindingues*.

November 22.

It costs me an effort to hold the pen. My arm trembles and my hand refuses to obey. Two days I have lain on the couch and even today I walk around in a fever. All my bones seem crushed. Adelaide is still in bed. Small wonder, after that night! If I should report all that happened to my brother, I think the pious gentleman might still return the enclosed check.

God, how my back aches! Each smallest movement makes me scream. I hear Adelaide whimper in her bed. A little while ago I was at her bedside. She said no word; she only cried softly and kissed my hand. And I could hardly realize that this poor little animal was the same cruel priestess with her clawing, blood-stained hands.

I will relate everything quietly.

Adelaide left early that morning; I mounted my fallow that afternoon. My two good Brownings were secure in my saddle pocket. This time I knew the way to the *honfoû*, which I reached at sundown. From afar I heard already the noise of excited voices, intermingled with the piercing sound of the *néklésin*. The great clearing was filled with black bodies; they had shed all their clothing and wore only a few knotted red handkerchiefs around their loins. Drinking out of their full-bellied *tafia* bottles, they ran up and down the path along which black and white fowl had been impaled on stakes. Shrieking, they shattered their bottles under the sacred strawberry tree. Apparently I was expected. A few men approached me, tethered my horse to a tree and led me along the path, pouring blood from their vessels over the pitifully cackling and fluttering hens as if they were so many flower pots. At the entrance to the temple someone pressed an empty bottle into my hand which I shattered under the strawberry tree. We entered the empty room, and everybody pressed after me. Shoved by naked bodies, I came close to the snake basket. Mighty pitch torches were fastened to the beams and sent their soot through the open roof-holes into the night. I was pleased with the red sheen upon the black, glistening bodies; it put me in good humor.

Next to the snake basket blazed a fire under a huge kettle. Close by the musicians sat upon their drums, *Houn*, *Hountor* and *Hountorgri*, dedicated to the three apostles, Peter, Paul and John. Behind them I saw a gigantic fellow beating the *Assauntor* drum which is spanned with the skin of a dead *papaloi*. The rhythm became ever faster; ever louder they thundered through the crowded interior.

The acting *avalous* forced the crowd back on both sides and cleared an empty space in the middle. They threw down dry wood and faggots, and poked their burning torches into them. Suddenly a brilliant fire was burning

on the stamped floor. Then they led five neophytes, three women and two men, into the circle. These had just finished their forty-days' purification in the mud bath which, fortunately, I had been spared. The drums stopped and the *papaloi* came forth.

He was an old, emaciated negro, clad like the rest in red knotted kerchiefs. He wore a blue ribbon around his forehead, from under which his long, foully clotted hair straggled. His assistants, the *dijons*, handed him a mass of hair, pieces of horn and herbs, which he scattered slowly into the flames, chanting incantations to the heavenly twins, *Saugo*, the god of lightning, and *Bado*, the god of winds, that they might fan the flames. Then he ordered the trembling neophytes to jump into the fire. The *dijons* coaxed and pushed the hesitating ones into the flames; it was marvelous to see how they jumped to and fro. Finally they were permitted to emerge again, and now the priest led them to the steaming kettle next to the snake basket. Now he implored *Opété*, the sacred turkey, and *Assougié*, the heavenly chatterbox. In their honor the neophytes had to reach into the boiling water; had to snatch pieces of meat from it which they distributed among the believers on huge cabbage leaves. Time and again the terribly scalded hands reached into the sizzling brew, until even the last one had his leaf. Only then did the measly old man accept them as full-fledged members of his community—in the name of *Attascholl*ô*s*, the great world spirit—and finally he left them to the mercy of their relatives and friends, who anointed their poor seared hands with salve.

I was curious to see whether this benevolent priest would ask a similar ceremony of me, too, but nobody bothered. To be sure, they handed me a piece of meat too, and I ate it just like the rest.

The *dijons* threw more fuel into the fire and arranged a spit over it. Then they dragged in three rams by the horns, two black and one white, and

led them before the *papaloi*, who pierced their throats with a powerful knife, and with one mighty thrust severed their heads. With his two hands he held them on high; showed them to the drummers first, then to the believers; and, dedicating them to the god of chaos, *Agaou Kata Badagri*, he threw them into the kettle. In the meantime, the *dijons* caught the blood in huge vessels, mixed it with rum and distributed it around to drink. Then they skinned the goats and put them on the spit.

I, too, drank; a sip at first, and then more and more. I felt a strange intoxication rise in me—a wild, lustful drunkenness such as I had never before known. I quite lost consciousness of my part as a disinterested spectator; more and more I entered into this wild world as one who belonged.

With pieces of charcoal the *dijons* drew a black circle on the floor next to the fire, and the *papaloi* stepped into it. And, while the joints roasted and sizzled, he invoked in a loud voice *Allégra Vadra*, the omniscient god. He begged him to enlighten his priests and the trusting community. And, through him, the god answered that enlightenment would come after the goat meat had been consumed. Thereupon the black figures sprang to the spit, tore off the meat with their hands and swallowed it hot and half raw. They broke the bones, gnawing them with their big teeth and throwing them high through the roof-holes into the night—in honor of *Allégra Vadra*, the great god. And again the drums began to drone. *Houn*, the small one, began; then *Hountor* and *Hountorgri*. And finally, the mighty *Assountor*—drum began to shriek its loathesome song. Ever stronger grew the excitement; ever closer and hotter the black bodies pressed around me. The *avalous* put the spit aside and stamped out the fire. The black crowd surged forward.

And suddenly,—I don’t know where she came from—Adelaide, the *mamaloi*, stood upon the snake basket. Like the rest she wore only a few

kerchiefs over her loins and her left shoulder. Her forehead was adorned with the blue priest ribbon; her marvelous white teeth shone in the red light of the torches. She was exquisite, absolutely exquisite! With his head bent low, the *papaloi* handed her a big vessel with rum and blood, which she drained in a single draught. The drums were silent. Softly at first, and ever growing in volume she began the great song of the holy snake:

Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio tè,
Cango moune dè lè,
Cango do ki la Cango li!

Twice, three times, she sang the wild words, until, from a hundred drunken lips, it came back to her:

Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!
Cango bafio tè,
Cango moune dè lè,
Cango do ki la
Cango li!

The small drum accompanied her song, which grew softer again and seemed to die down completely. She rocked to and fro from the hips, bent her head and lifted it, drawing weird snake-lines in the air. And the crowd was silent; breathless in expectation. Softly someone whispered: —Be blessed, *Manho*, our priestess!—And another one: —St. John the Baptist kiss you, *Houangan*, his beloved!—The eyes of the negroes bulged from their sockets. Everybody was staring at the softly humming *mamaloi*. Then, in a faltering voice, she said quietly:

“Come here! *Houedo* hears you, the great snake!”

Everybody pressed close. It was almost impossible for the servants and priests to preserve order.

“Shall I get a new ass this summer?”

“Will my child get well?”

“Will my lover return, whom they made a soldier?”

Everyone had a question to ask, a wish to make.

The black Pythia answered, her head sunk deep on her chest, her arms stretched downwards, stiff; her fingers painfully spread apart—perfect oracles which said neither “yes” nor “no,” but from which each one could take what he wished to hear. Satisfied, they stepped aside, throwing coppers into the old felt hat which the *papaloi* held. There was silver, too.

Again the drums droned; slowly the *mamaloi* seemed to awaken from her dream. She sprang down from the basket, tore the snake from it and mounted again. It was a long, black and yellow reptile. Confused by the firelight, it thrust its tongue forth and slowly wound itself around the outstretched arms of the priestess. The believers fell to the floor, touching the earth with their foreheads.

“Long live the *mamaloi*, our mother and queen! She, *Houdja-Nikon*, our ruler!”

And they prayed to the great snake, and the priestess exacted the oath of eternal allegiance.

“May your brain rot and your intestines within you if ever you break the oath you swore!”

Then they chanted:

“We swear three strong oaths to you, *Hougon-badagri*, St. John the Baptist, you who come to us as *Sobagui*, as *Houedo*, the great voodoo god!”

Now the *mamaloi* opened another basket which stood behind her. From it she drew fowl, black ones and white ones, and thrust them high into the

air. The believers jumped up from the soil and grabbed the fluttering animals, tearing their heads off. Greedily they drank the freshly streaming blood that gushed from the fowl. Then they threw them out through the holes in the roof:

"For you, *Houedo*; for you, *Hougonbadagri*, as a sign that we keep our oath!"

From behind six men pressed around the *mamaloi*. They wore devils' masks; goat furs hung from their shoulders, and their bodies were painted red with blood.

"Fear, fear Cimbi-Kita!" they cried.

The mob surged back and formed a small opening into which they stepped. They led a girl of ten years by a rope around her neck. The child looked around, surprised, timid, afraid, but did not cry. It staggered, could hardly stand on its feet; quite drunk with rum. The *papaloi* came close.

"To *Azilit* I give you, and to *Dom Pèdre*! May they carry you to him, the greatest of all devils, to *Cimbi-Kita*!"

He strew herbs into the woolly hair of the child, horn-shavings and tufts of hair, and then laid a burning cinder on top of it. But, before the terrified child could reach with its hand into the burning hair, the *mamaloi*, with a horrible shriek, threw herself down from the basket like a maniac. Her fingers closed around the small neck; she lifted the child high up into the air and choked it to death.

"Aa—bo—bo!" she shrieked.

It seemed as if she would never let go of her victim. Finally the head priest tore the lifeless child away from her and, as he had done to the rams, cut the head off with one stroke. At the same time the devil-priests with mighty voices chanted their triumphant song:

"Interrogez le cimetière,

Il vous dira
De nous ou de la mort,
Qui des deux fournit
Les plus d'hôtes."

Again the *papaloi*, with outstretched arms, showed the head to the drummers; again he threw it into the seething caldron. Rigid, indifferent, the *mamaloi* stood, While the devil-priests caught the blood in their rum vessels and hacked the body to pieces. Like animals they threw the raw pieces of meat to the believers; the latter fell on them, fought for them, tore at them.

"Aa—bo—bo! Le cabrit sans cornes!" they shrieked.

And all of them drank the fresh blood mixed with strong rum. A horrible drink, but one drinks it, must drink it, more and ever more!

Now one of the devil-priests advanced into the circle next to the priestess. He tore his mask off; threw down his fur. Naked the black man stood there, his body weirdly painted with gore and hands dyed red with blood. Everybody was silent; nowhere was a voice to be heard. Only the small *Houn* drum softly droned to the devil dance, the dance of *Dom Pèdre* which was about to begin.

Motionless the dancer stood, without moving a muscle, for several minutes. Slowly he rocked to and fro; first the head, then the body. All his muscles were tense. A strange excitement seemed to overcome him and to infect everyone like a mystic fluid.

Each one looks at the other, still without moving; but one senses how the nerves begin to tingle. Now the priest begins to dance, whirls slowly at first, then ever faster. Louder sounds the *Houn* drum; the *Hountor* drum chimes in. Now life comes into the black bodies; one lifts a foot, another one an arm. They devour each other with their eyes. Two seize each other

and join the dance. Now the *Hountorgri*, too, sounds and the mighty *Assauntor* drum; its side of human skin shrieks a terrifying, lashing wail of lust.

Everybody leaps up. They whirl and dance, kick, stamp, jump like goats, cast themselves to the ground, beat the floor with their heads, leap up again, wave their arms and legs, and rave and shriek to the wild rhythm the priestess sings. Proudly she stands in the middle, lifting high the holy snake and singing her song:

"Leh! Eh! Bomba, hen, hen!"

Close by her side is the *papaloi*; from huge vats he squirts blood over the black figures which leap ever wilder, chant ever fiercer the song of the queen.

They take hold of one another, tear the red rags from their bodies. Their limbs intertwine; hot perspiration runs from the naked bodies. Drunk with rum and blood, whipped into boundless lust, they tear at each other like animals, throw one another to the ground, lift each other high in the air, thrust their greedy teeth into each other's flesh! And I feel myself drawn irresistibly into this devil-dance of madmen. A crazy lust invades the hall, a bloody delirium of love that transcends all human bounds. They have stopped singing a long time ago; out of their convulsions and delirium only the horrible devil-shout is audible:

"Aa—bo—bo!"

I see men and women bite each other, possessing each other in every conceivable manner. Blood-thirsty, they thrust their nails into the flesh, tearing deep wounds. The blood lulls their senses. I see men crawl on men; women on women. There, five roll together in a dark knot; here, one, like a dog, stoops over the snake basket. Their mad lust knows no distinction, cannot even mark living from inanimate things.

Two negro girls fall on me; tear at my clothes. I seize their breasts, throw them to the floor, roll around, bite, shriek—just like all the rest. I see Adelaide indiscriminately possessing one man after the other; and women, too, always fresh ones—her devilish lust unquenchable. She rushes at me naked; red blood trickles from her arms and breasts. Only the blue priest-ribbon still adorns her forehead. Like black snakes her thick locks crawl from under it. She hurls me down, takes me by force, rushes up again and thrusts another woman into my arms. And she staggers away, embracing and embraced, ever by other black arms.

And now, all resistance gone, I plunge into the wildest frenzy, into the most unheard of embraces; leap, rage and shriek, wilder and madder than anybody else, the horrible:

"Aa—bo—bo!"

I found myself outside, lying on the dance-place in a heap of black men and women. The sun was already up. All around me the black bodies lay, groaning and writhing in their dreams. With an immense effort I rose; my clothes hung from me in bloody tatters. I saw Adelaide lying close by, bruised and bloody from head to foot. I lifted her, carried her to my horse. Where I found the strength, I do not know; but I managed to lift her onto the horse's back, and so rode home, holding the senseless woman in my arms. I had her put to bed and went to mine....

I hear her whimpering again. I shall go and fetch her a glass of lemonade.

March 7, 1907.

Now months have gone by. As I read over these last pages, it seems to me as if another, not myself, had lived through all this. It seems all so far away and so strange. And particularly when I am with Adelaide, I have to

force myself to believe that she was present, too. She, a mamaloi! She, this tender, trusting, happy little creature? She has only one thought: our child. Will it really be a boy? Surely a boy? A hundred times she asks me that. And is so happy every time I tell her that it will most certainly be a boy. It is too funny: this child that is not even yet come takes up a large part of my thoughts. We have already agreed upon a name; already all the linen is in readiness. And I am almost as worried for the little worm as Adelaide herself.

Incidentally, I have discovered a new extraordinary faculty in her. Now she is a full-fledged department head in my business, and does very well indeed. I have founded a new branch which gives me a lot of amusement. I distill a miracle-water, good for all sorts of things. The recipe is very simple: rain-water colored pink with a little tomato juice. This is poured into little fat bottles which I import labelled from New York. The label is designed after my own directions; it bears *Cimbi-Kita's* bloody axe, and the inscription: *Eau de Dom Pèdre*. The bottles cost me three cents each, and I sell them for a dollar. Moreover, the sales are excellent; the negros almost fight for it. Since last week I have also begun to ship them into the interior. The purchasers are very well satisfied; they claim that it works marvels for all kinds of ailments. If they could write, I would have quite a collection of testimonials by now. Adelaide, too, is of course convinced of its supernatural powers, and deals in it with real zeal. Her salary and percentage—she also gets a percentage from the sales—is always turned over to me that I may save it for —her boy.—She is really charming, this black child. I almost believe I am in love with her.

August 26, 1907.

Adelaide is beside herself with joy; she has her boy! But that isn't all. The boy is white, and that makes her proud beyond belief. All negro children, as is well known, are not black at birth, but rather pink-looking, just like the children of white people. But, whereas these become white, negro children grow black, or at least brown, in the case of hybrids. Adelaide knew this, of course, and, with tears in her eyes, waited for her child to get black. She never let it from her arms, not even for a second, as if she could prevent it from acquiring its natural color. But hour after hour passed; and day after day; and her child became white and remained white —snow—white, in fact, whiter than myself. If it had not had black, kinky hair, nobody would have believed it to be of negro blood. Not until three weeks had passed did Adelaide permit me to take it in my arms. I never held a child in my arms; it was a strange feeling when the little fellow laughed at me and milled about with its little arms. What force he already has in his tiny fingers, particularly in his thumb—which, of course, have three joints—really a marvelous fellow!

It is a pure joy to watch the mother standing in the store behind the counter, the pink miracle bottles piled up before her. Her strong, black bosom laughs from her red blouse, and the healthy white baby drinks mightily. Really, I feel well in my old days, and as young as ever. In my happiness over the birthday of my son, I have sent a large extra remittance to my dear brother. I can easily afford it; there will always be enough for the boy.

September 4.

I had sworn to myself that I would never again have anything to do with the voodoo crowd, unless it were in connection with my miracle water.

Now I had to busy myself once more with them, after all; not as a participant this time, but as an attacker.

Parin

Yesterday the old hag who weeds my garden came crying to me. Her great-grandchild had disappeared. I consoled her by saying he probably had run into the woods. She, too, had believed so at first, and had searched for days; but now she knew that the *bidangos* had caught him. He was being held in a hut outside the village and next week he was to be sacrificed in honor of *Cimbi-Kita*, *Azilit* and *Dom Pèdre*. I promised to help her and rode off on my mission. When I got to the thatched hut a black fellow stepped before me, whom I recognized as the dancer of the devil-priest. I pushed him aside and went inside. There I found the boy squatting in a big box, bound hand and foot. Big pieces of corn-bread soaked in rum lay next to him. He stared at me from stupid, animal eyes. I cut him loose and took him away, the priest not daring to interfere. I had the boy taken directly aboard a Hamburg-American liner leaving that night. To the captain I gave a letter to a business friend in St. Thomas, who was to take care of the boy. Thus he is safe. Had he remained here he would have fallen victim to the sacrificial knife before long. This voodoo crowd doesn't easily let go of someone they have destined for slaughter. The old crone sobbed with joy when she heard that her only happiness—incidentally, an utterly helpless rascal—was safe aboard ship. Now she has nothing to fear; when he returns he will be a man, capable himself of offering sacrifices.

As a matter of fact, my action pleased me personally, too. It is assort of revenge for the mulatto boys who disappeared from my courtyard. The old woman has told me they, too, met the fate that was planned for her great-grandchild.

September 10.

For the first time in many months I have had another quarrel with Adelaide. She learned that I had saved Phylloxera's great-grandchild, and asked me about it. The priests of *Cimbi-Kita* had destined the boy to die; how could I dare to tear him from their strong clutches?

In all this time we had never said another word about voodoo, ever since the day, shortly after the sacrificial feast, when she had voluntarily told me that she had resigned her office as mamaloi. She could no longer remain a priestess, she said, because she loved me too much. I had laughed at the time, but inwardly I was pleased, nevertheless.

Now she began once more with this terrible superstition. At first I tried to argue with her, but gave it up soon enough, realizing that I could not take away from her a belief which she had absorbed with her mother's milk. Besides that I recognized that her reproaches sprang from her love for me, and out of her great fear for my safety. She cried and sobbed, and nothing I could do would quiet her.

September 15.

Adelaide is impossible. Everywhere she sees shadows. She remains close by my side, like a dog who wants to protect me. Now this, to be sure, is touching, but also annoying; particularly because the boy, whom she never leaves alone, has quite a remarkable voice. Everything I eat she prepares herself; and, not content with this, she tastes everything before she permits me to eat it. Now I know that these negroes are great poison mixers who know their botany thoroughly, but I don't believe that any one of them would dare to use his science on me. So I laugh at Adelaide—but, nevertheless, I don't feel any too well about it.

September 24.

So they have already taken away from me my “soul”! I know this from Phylloxera; the old lady is no less excited and anxious for me than Adelaide. Today she came to warn me. I wanted to send Adelaide from the room, but she insisted upon listening. It seems that the priests have set afoot the rumor that I had betrayed *Cimbi-Kita*, to whom I had sworn allegiance; that I am a *loup-garou*, a werewolf who sucks the blood of children while they sleep. Thereupon some of the *dijons* stole my “soul” by shaping a likeness of me in clay and hanging it in the temple. This alone would be harmless enough, but it has a rather unpleasant feature: from now on I am a man without a soul, whom anyone may kill. In fact, he who does it accomplishes a good deed.

Nevertheless I do not consider the affair of great importance and do not intend to share the women’s fears. So long as my bloodhounds stand before my door, so long as my Brownings are at my bedside and so long as Adelaide prepares my food, I certainly don’t fear these black fellows.

“For ages no negro has dared to attack a white man!” I consoled Adelaide.

But she answered: “They no longer consider you a white man! They count you as one of them since you swore allegiance to *Cimbi-Kita*!”

October 2.

I pity the poor woman so much. She follows me like a shadow; not for a second does she leave me out of her sight. She hardly sleeps at night, sitting on a chair at my bedside and guarding my sleep.

She no longer weeps; quietly, silently she walks beside me as if she were wrestling with a great resolution.

How would it be if I gave up my business here? I don’t want to go to Germany; not because I fear to collide again with its silly laws—long ago I

ceased to bother with other women, since I have had Adelaide and the boy. But, I really cannot bring a negress along as my wife. I might retire to St. Thomas. Adelaide would certainly feel at home there. I could build a beautiful country seat and might start some new kind of business, if I must have some occupation. If I could only sell my stuff here for a fairly decent sum.

I am writing in my work-room which looks like a fortress. Adelaide has gone out; she did not say where she was going, but I am positive she wants to bargain with the voodoo crowd. The three dogs are in the room before the locked door; my revolver is handy on my desk. It is really ridiculous—as if a negro would dare harm a hair on my head in broad daylight! But I had to give in to Adelaide's wishes. She went alone; the child lies next to me on the couch and sleeps. I hope she will bring home good news.

October 30.

I think Adelaide has gone mad. She screamed and beat upon the door. I couldn't run fast enough to open it. She rushed directly to the boy, snatched him up and almost smothered him with her caresses. The little fellow began to cry pitifully. But she did not let go of him; kissed him, embraced him. I actually feared she would suffocate him.

Her behavior is really shocking. She says no word, but quite apparently she has been successful. She no longer tastes my meals; her anxiety seems to have disappeared. This surely means that all danger is past. But still she continues to follow me like a dog. At dinner she sat silently by my side without touching a bite; but, not for a second did she take her eyes off me.

Something terrible seems to be brewing in her mind, but she does not speak; not the tiniest word does she say. I don't want to torment her, for I see how the poor woman is consumed with love for me.

I will take every step to get away from here as quickly as possible. I have already spoken with the Hamburg-American agent. He is not opposed to the deal, but he wants to pay hardly one-fourth of what my business is worth, and that only on the installment plan. And yet, I shall probably accept. After all, I have made my share in safety for a long time and can afford to make a transaction at a loss. God, how happy Adelaide will be when I tell her about it! Then I shall marry her, for the boy's sake. She really deserves it. And when everything is in readiness, I shall say: —Now, child, pack your things.—She will be mad with joy!

November 11.

My negotiations seem to be progressing satisfactorily. Even the cablegram from the agent's bank has come, stating that they stand ready to advance him the necessary cash. This does away with the principal obstacle; the details can be easily settled, since I am more than willing to compromise. The fellow knows this and insists upon calling me his "friend and benefactor."ש Well, I don't blame him for not being able to hide his joy over such a marvelous transaction.

It is rather hard for me to keep my secret from Adelaide. Her condition gets worse and worse. Well, she probably will be able to stand it another week, and then her joy will be so much the greater. She called on her voodoo brethren a few times, and each time she returned in a still more desperate condition. I don't understand it at all, since all danger seems to have passed. All doors are now open at night as they used to be and even the cooking she leaves to the other servants. What else can it be?

She hardly speaks a word now. But her love for me and the boy grows each day, grows almost boundless. This love has something uncanny about it which almost takes my breath away. If I take the boy on my knee and play

with him, she shrieks, rushes from the room, throws herself on the bed and sobs as if her heart were breaking.

She must be ill and almost contaminates me with her strange disease. I shall bless the moment when we are able to leave this terrible hole with its horrible secrets.

November 15.

This morning she was quite beside herself. She wanted to do a few errands, taking the child with her. Thus she bid me farewell, but in a most unnatural way. Her eyes had long ago become red and inflamed from crying, but this morning entire cataracts fell from them. She could not tear herself from my arms; time and again she held the boy for me to kiss—I was quite moved by the scene. Thank God, the Hamburg-American agent came directly afterwards to bring the contracts for my signature. Now the names are affixed to them and the bank check is in my hands. This house is no longer mine; I begged the buyer to permit me to stay another few days.

"Half a year, if you want to!" he said.

But I promised that I would not want to stay even another week. Saturday the steamer for St. Thomas is leaving, and by then everything must be ready.

Now I shall put flowers on the table. When she returns, she shall hear the joyous news.

5 P. M.

This is horrible! Adelaide did not come back; she did not come, I say! She did not come! I ran in to town; nobody had seen her. I returned home; she had not arrived. I went to the garden to look for the old hag; she was not there. I ran to her hut—and found her, bound to a pillar.

“At last you have come—at last! Hurry, before it is too late!”

I cut her loose; it was difficult to get anything out of the half-crazed woman.

“She has gone to the *honfoû*—the *mamaloi*,” she stammered. “To the honfoû with her child. They bound me so I could not warn you.”

I ran back to the house to get my pistols. I am writing these lines while my horse is being saddled. Oh God, what may... Please God...!

November 16.

I rode through the woods.

I do not think I thought about anything; only this: you must get there in time—you must get there in time!

The sun had gone down when I crossed the clearing. Two fellows caught hold of my reins. I slashed my whip across their faces. I jumped off, threw the reins over the strawberry tree. Then I rushed into the honfoû, thrusting the crowd right and left.

I know I cried out. There, in the red light, stood the *mamaloi* on the basket, the snake coiled around her blue ribbon. And, high above her head, she held my child by the throat. And she choked it, choked it, choked it!

I must have shrieked. I tore my Brownings from my pocket and fired. Two shots; one at her face, the other at her heart. She tumbled from the basket. I sprang forward and lifted up the child. I realized immediately that it was dead, but still so warm, so very warm.

Right and left I shot into the crowd. They pushed and fell aside; they howled, bellowed and shrieked. I tore the torches from the walls and hurled them into the thatch. It burned like tinder.

I mounted my horse and rode back, carrying the dead child home. I did save my child; not from death but from the teeth of those black devils. On

my desk I found this letter—I don't know how it got there:

"You had betrayed *Cimbi-Kita* and they wanted to kill you. But they will spare you if I sacrifice my child. I love it so; but I love you still more. Therefore I will do what *Cimbi-Kita* demands. I know that you will drive me from you when you hear what I have done. Therefore I shall take poison and you will not see me again. But you will know how much I love you. For now you are quite safe.

I love you dearly.

Adelaide."

* *

*

Now my life lies shattered before me. What shall I do? I know no more. I shall put these pages into an envelope and dispatch them. That is one bit of work left to do. And then?

* *

*

I answered immediately. My letter was sent in care of the steamship agent, with the note: —Please forward.—I got it back with another note: "Addressee dead."

The Worst Betrayal

They called him Stephe. That came about because his predecessor was called that and the old grave digger was much too lazy to get accustomed to another name.

So he said to the new help, “I will call you Stephe.”

It happened in Egypt, not on the Nile—but in the state of Illinois, down in the southern part, where it is called Egypt because of the wild mix of bad races that lived together there. Bad, inferior races—or that was how it looked to the Americans; Croatians, Slovakians, Hungarians, Czechs, Serbians, Slovenes, Russians, Greeks, Italians and Ukrainians. But the Yankee didn’t know any of these names. He only heard that none of them spoke English, only some confused jumble—babble like in the tower of Babel. And Babel, well, that was in Egypt, wasn’t it? Or somewhere around there. That was why the wide land was called Egypt.

The Americans were the masters; the land belonged to them, all the buildings, all the huts and coal mines. The Negro slaves in the south had been free for half a century—they didn’t need to work anymore. But the whites that spewed forth out of Europe; they had to work. And if they didn’t want to, if they went on strike, the masters would take out their machine guns and shoot a couple dozen dead, lock a few others up in prison—in the name of freedom. They did this in Egypt and everywhere else in the land.

Really a few of the Egyptians were very clever. They horded a little gold together, then a little more, and still more until they finally became Americans and masters themselves. Freemen, not with social equality; oh no—but still with property. And they were the worst; they understood the best how to press the last of the sap out of their slaves.

The name of the small city, near where Stephe lived, did not sound Egyptian at all, not English either, nor Indian. It sounded German, Andernache. A few Bavarian and Rhinelander farmers had settled there long years ago—no one knew anymore when that had been. But they were long gone, except for only a few families of them here and there, and when industry came, the Egyptians came with it. Only a few of the old settlers remained behind, two or three German names. They had also become Americans and been masters for a long time, rich masters.

In spite of that, this city looked different than all the others around it. There were no wooden barracks, no whitewashed huts; but proper brick houses, overgrown with grapevines, gardens everywhere, apple trees, pear trees and cherry trees.

The low races understood these differences very well and destroyed nothing, built houses alongside them, and almost felt human themselves—much, much more than anywhere else in Egypt land.

Outside the city lay the cemetery, and that was even more German than the city. Large oaks stood there and many weeping willows. The German graves lay almost in the middle, on a little hill, and you could read the names: Schmitz, Scholz and Huber. All the stones were very simple, but well cared for; so well that the ivy that covered the ground did not touch any of them. Apparently the cemetery did not belong to anyone, to no religious congregation or to any of the tribes of the Egyptians. Everyone used it—and paid for it. Twice a year the bank in the city sent out a check from Chicago, or was it from San Francisco, to the old grave digger, who was the master.

When the Germans left, they sold everything, houses and gardens, but not the cemetery. No one could sell that—so no one could buy it either. But someone from Andernach, some Schmitz, or Huber or Scholtz, who was

long since dead, had established a trust and the old man received that money for his work from the interest. So he was the caretaker of the dead, paid by themselves, and master in his land—and the Egyptians treated him as such. He sold them gravesites, and charged more or less, just as he pleased, inscribed crosses, stones and pillars according to his own taste and from his own workplace.

He was a Bohemian, Pawlaczek was his name. He had come over early and lived here with the Germans. Now he was the oldest man in the city. He had forgotten his Czech over forty years ago, and then with effort, regained it again when the Egyptians came. He threw his German and English into a pot and made a thick brogue out of it. He had a workplace for gravestones and five Italian stonemasons, six gardeners and just as many gravediggers. Stephe was one of them.

Stephe was no Egyptian, he was an American. He was apparently named Howard J. Hammond, and came out of Petershaum, Mass. It had been thirty three years since this had happened.

As for the author, the one that has written this down in letters, as he received it from Stephe; he has experienced some portions of this story himself. He was Jan Olieslagers from Limburg and of Dutch nationality—although a Fleming as well, and a German in culture and upbringing. He had worked for the German interests during the war, and when the United States took part, was considered very suspiciously. To the right and to the left Germans were being arrested and thrown into prison, many of them good friends of his. Jan Olieslagers had little inclination for being in prison—and decided that it was time for a break, to disappear from New York for a while.

So he came to Andernach in Egyptland. There was a large paint factory there, near the city and he got a job there. He didn't understand very much of chemistry at all—but he did understand how to give the impression that he knew something. He knew, only very superficially, the head manager who was from New York; who also knew that he bore the title of Dr. and had something to do with the German cause. So he believed it was a very good catch to get a great German chemist, one who had so many secrets. That was something a person could hold over him for a while—what did it matter that he was a German? He could certainly not do much mischief here in Andernach. Really it would be advantageous because he would be useful as a new chemist, not need to be paid very much, just his living expenses and a small room in the factory.

Jan Olieslagers loitered around in the laboratory and didn't lift a hand. When finally called to account for it, he declared that he was not able to think when he was working under someone else. He had to have his own work room—and no one was permitted to spy on him. And so great was the admiration of German science, here and everywhere else in the country, that they granted his wishes, did everything possible in expectation of some great success by him.

The Fleming had a good memory, snapped off a couple of quick words, made up a couple of beautiful phrases, and read some books out of the factory library. He soon had a general idea of the subject. Then he sent out orders for supplies—of the things that he needed from all over the world. He passed the weeks and months in this manner.

He never conversed with anyone and only went out in the evenings to stretch his legs—occasionally going to the cemetery. That is where he made the acquaintance of Stephe. The following story is made from that acquaintance, and is what Jan Olieslagers wrote down.

Jan Olieslagers sat with Stephe many evenings on the stone bench under the old linden tree. Stephe had a secret—that annoyed the Fleming. He could sense that it was a special one, and he really wanted to know what it was. But Stephe really didn't say very much, just sat there for hours. The two sat there without speaking a word. Olieslagers couldn't figure the fellow out. He searched and searched and never found an opening. Stephe didn't drink, didn't smoke, didn't chew and didn't have anything at all to do with women—so what could a person talk with him about?

It would be very hard to say what attracted Jan Olieslagers to Stephe during those months. There was nothing about him that stood out or was very memorable. If he would have bought a passport, they would have written down, hair—brown, forehead, nose, chin, ears—common, yet he was handsome—something was there that made him handsome.

One thing was certain; there was something that this man was incessantly preoccupied with. It was always there, sometimes stronger and often just very weak—but it never left him, or only during those few times when Jan Olieslagers succeeded in turning Stephe's thoughts to something else. Such as when Stephe, in broken words, without any relationship to each other, shared weak memories from out of his early years.

Yes, he came from Massachusetts, of Methodist parents. He had not learned much and left home at a young age, then had traveled all over the country. He had been everything that a man could be without being anything; an elevator boy, dishwasher, poster distributor, stoker on a steamer on the great ocean, a cowboy in Arizona, an usher in a movie theater. He worked at all kinds of factories and on just as many farms, from Van Couver to San Augustine and from Los Angeles to Halifax. He had not stayed in any one place for very long; and from time to time had repeatedly worked as a strike breaker and as a land surveyor. But now, for over two

years already, he had discovered his true occupation, this job in Andernach was really to his liking, and he would remain here for the rest of his life.

As Stephe said this, little flames flickered in his eyes and with effort a smile crept over his lips. Then he sat there thinking again and didn't speak a word.

Olieslagers understood, this was it, what he had been looking for, the difficult, seven times barred door; and behind it crouched a strange animal.

Then came the draft. All men from eighteen to forty-five years old had to register for it.

Stephe became anxious—and this anxiousness climbed with every passing day.

"Why don't you want to become a soldier?" asked Olieslagers.

Stephe shook his head very determinedly.

"No," he grumbled, "no".

And another time he said, "It's just this—I don't want to go away from here."

One Sunday morning he knocked on the door of the laboratory, and closed it carefully after making sure the Fleming was alone. Then he came out with his request. He had to report next Wednesday. Could the Doctor give him something that would make him appear sick? Unfit? He didn't want to go away; couldn't go away. Jan Olieslagers didn't consider very long at all, and spoke to him in a moment. There was only one thing he required: in return Stephe must tell him what it was that held him here so strongly. Stephe squinted at him suspiciously.

"No," he finally said, and then left.

The next day Olieslagers searched for him at the cemetery. This time he spoke with him for a long time, attempting to sway him with all his

persuasive skills. But Stephe didn't want to.

"Look," cried the Fleming. "You have a secret. I am curious and I want to know what it is. So tell me. It won't cost you anything, and on Wednesday there will be no person more unfit to be a soldier than you."

Stephe shook his head and stood up from the bench. But the next morning he was at the laboratory very early. He pulled out $230 dollar bills from his pockets, his entire savings. The Fleming waved him out the door.

Then that evening he went back to the cemetery again but did not meet Stephe at the customary bench, so he waited for a time, and then finally went to look for him. He finally found him sitting on a fresh grave, brooding.

He called out to him, "Come here, Stephe."

Stephe didn't move. Then the Fleming stood a step closer and struck him on the shoulder.

"Stand up! Come on! I will give you what you want!"

Slowly the grave digger got up.

"Really?" he asked. "My appointment is tomorrow."

The Fleming nodded, "Does digitalis grow around here anywhere?"

Stephe didn't understand him.

"I mean foxglove."

Stephe led him to some and broke off some flowers at the bidding of the Fleming.

"Where do you live?" asked Jan Olieslagers.

Stephe went there. They came at last, in the middle of death's garden, to the little stone charnel house. Stephe pulled a large key from out of his pocket and unlocked it.

They entered. In one corner stood a couple of spades, pickaxes and shovels, and behind them lay empty sacks. Otherwise there was nothing

else in the room.

“You live here?” asked the Fleming.

Stephe unlocked a second door that led into a small room.

“Here,” he nodded.

There was a field cot, a small table, a couple of chairs, and a wash basin on one of them. There was also an old chest, a broken clothes rack and a small stove. Nothing hung on the walls.

“Do you have any alcohol?” asked Olieslagers. “Now brew some tea out of this stuff. Drink it before you go to bed.”

He explained to him exactly what he had to do and how he had to behave during the medical examination. Stephe repeated everything out loud and many times. Then he opened up the chest, took out his money and offered it to him once more.

The Fleming shook his head.

“Leave it, Stephe. I’m doing this for you because I’m your friend!”

Then he left.

Stephe ran outside after him. He held a small coral necklace in his hand.

“Would you like this, Herr?”

Jan Olieslagers examined it.

“Where did you get this?” he laughed. “From a bride?”

Stephe nodded.

“And where is she,” asked the Fleming.

“Dead,” said Stephe.

Olieslagers gave it back to him.

“Neapolitan,” he murmured, “from out of Egypt land.”

But he didn’t ask any more questions.

“Keep it Stephe, as a souvenir!—I don’t want anything, I tell you! Not even your secret—if you don’t want to tell me. Don’t forget what you have to do—and good luck tomorrow. Come to me at the laboratory and tell me about it.”

Then he left with long strides.

It was late when Stephe came to him. He was pale and trembling, but a satisfied smile lay on his face.

“Free,” he cried.

The Fleming congratulated him.

“Set down, my boy! Now we will get the poison out of your body as quickly as possible—or at least make it more bearable! He had no idea what was needed, or what he could use for that purpose. But he thought to himself, alcohol certainly couldn’t do any harm and perhaps it might even help a little. So he mixed whiskey with it. Stephe drank, gulped down one glass after another, like medicine, not saying a word and although the Fleming was disappointed, he didn’t show it. He spoke to him as if to an invalid, giving him another one, forcing him to guzzle down astounding quantities. Stephe drank, and as he left, thanked him. His tongue lolled in his body and his legs swayed, forsaking their service. But it was only his body that was drunk, what he said was completely understandable and clear.

Olieslagers heard him fall down the steps, went after him and lifted him up. Then he grabbed them solidly around the body and with an effort dragged him back home. When they were at the cemetery gate Stephe pulled himself back together.

“Thank you, Herr,” he said.

Stephe never read a book, never read a newspaper. He was completely indifferent to everything that went on outside of the cemetery. He knew that

there was a war somewhere in the world. But he was not interested in who was fighting the war, why, or where it was at. Yet now he took an interest in everything that his friend did. This even went so far that he asked questions. What did he do in the city? Why was he here? Did he earn much money?

Olieslagers gave him answers, clear and simple, so that Stephe understood. He felt certain that Stephe would never betray him. But the Fleming's strange desire was not to speak about himself, but something else. Stephe was consumed by a thought—and every day Jan Olieslagers scratched a little more to find out what it was. It seemed as if he himself was obsessed with this passion. He felt that questions would not help, so he guarded himself well, guarded against showing this crazy desire that was the only thing that drove him to the cemetery every day.

He never asked questions, never made the slightest request. But when the grave digger asked him anything, he gave exact answers, left things entirely in the other's hands.

"You see, Stephe," he said. "That is my secret. I am telling you because you are my friend and I trust you."

Stephe nodded. He understood quite well that when you had a friend, you had to trust them. But he still didn't say a word.

Then came the day when there was an argument with the administrator at the laboratory. The director had called the Fleming and final told him that he needed to see some results. Up until then there had been nothing, nothing at all! And he gave him a solid ultimatum. He must produce something the next week, produce something to prove that he was actually working—the director didn't doubt that for even a moment, but he needed some results, or else he would have him arrested.

He had made some inquiries back in New York, and knew very well what he had been up to during the past year. Now he had to decide, and he

had to take that into consideration, perhaps even make a new accusation against him, namely that he had joined the factory in order to smuggle things or find out military chemical secrets. One thing was certain—somehow he had to explain his presence.

Jan Olieslagers was only amazed that this interrogation had not happened months ago, that he had been left alone for so long.

“You are right, sir!” he said. “If my only choice now is to produce something positive for you or go to prison, then I would be a fool if I chose to go to prison! Only, a week is not long enough. I need four weeks.”

“I will give you two weeks Sir, and not a day longer, said the director. “Good day!”

Still, that was fourteen days—the Fleming was entirely satisfied with that. It was just enough time—and every day was a victory. He closed himself in his laboratory, smoked and read. That evening at the cemetery he explained everything to Stephe, word for word, as it had happened.

“I have to go!” He finished. “If only I had some idea of how and to where!”

He thought out loud, and Stephe nodded at times or shook his head. Once in a while he threw out a word or asked a question.

“Canada?” He proposed.

Olieslagers laughed. It was also in the war, on the same side as the states—today both of them were united. And the Mexican border was so guarded that not even a dog could get through!

Always lagers laughed. It is also in the war. On the same side, as the states – both of them are united today. And the Mexican border is so guarded, that not even a dog can come through!

“No, I must remain hidden underground somewhere in a large city. If only I wasn’t so God damned well known! There were a hundred thousand

paid secret agents searching the entire land, as well as a couple million that were willing to help them find spies for free—and they have already been searching for me for almost a year.

Neither one of them came up with anything. When the Fleming left, Stephe shook hands with him—for the first time.

On another evening Stephe was waiting for him at the bench.

“I have thought it through, Sir,” he said. “You must not leave. You must remain here!”

The Fleming looked at him and stood up in astonishment.

“Here! Where here?”

Stephe waved his arms around in a circle.

“Here,” he repeated. “All the helpers have been taken away. The old man would hire you immediately, would be happy to get some help.”

“As what?” asked Olieslagers. “As—a grave digger!”

Stephe nodded.

The Fleming laughed, and then smiled. That might not be so stupid. A gravedigger? Well at least it didn’t require any special knowledge, as his current job did!

In a moment he saw how he could make his escape. Twelve days’ time —bah. That was more than enough!

That evening they spoke for a long time; not letting even the smallest things go without consideration. And there was only one point that they went back and forth about, who was going to pay for the new clothes that Stephe would have to buy for him. The Fleming didn’t want it, but Stephe was determined to pay for them with his own money. He would give them to his friend.

Early the next morning at the factory Dr. Jan Olieslagers made a small explosion in his laboratory that didn’t do much damage, but sounded very

loud. People came running and pounded on the locked door, the director among them. When the door finally opened, they saw the Fleming with a completely wrapped head, only his eyes and forehead was visible.

"What happened?" Asked the director.

Olieslagers held the door open.

"Come on in," he answered. "But no one else!"

He pushed the others back and locked the door.

"What happened? What can happen any day in any laboratory! I have burned myself!"

"I will send for the doctor," cried the American.

"You would send for the devil!" the Fleming countered. "Do you think I have time now to deal with a doctor?—I still have twelve days—twelve days—and I will be ready, just leave me alone! Nothing else matters—whether I burn my nose—nothing else matters to you anyway, you are so God damned indifferent!"

"Very good, Herr, very good!" laughed the director. "Just as you wish! —Do you need some medicine?"

"No cat needs to clean me up!" cried the other. I've already done that!"

Then he considered, "There is one thing that I would like, Herr! Now I'm going to be twelve days without leaving this room. Could you make arrangements that I have food, drink and whatever else I desire brought here? And that all of my requests should be immediately followed—by all of the others.

The director nodded, "So it will be, Herr!"—

He went to the door and turned back.

"When you are finished—it won't be bad for you here!"

Jan Olieslagers carefully closed the door behind him.

“But if you don’t squeeze anything out of me—you will put me in prison, won’t you?”

He carefully closed the curtains on the window, and then took the cloth from his face. For twelve long days Jan Olieslagers sat in his room, smoked and read. He didn’t have any desires, but the director sent him whiskey, wine, cigarettes and all kinds of delicacies. The bandages were always laid to the side, and he carefully put them on every time before he opened the door.

He didn’t touch any of the stuff that lay around on the table. Only the little mirror which he took up every couple of hours, and carefully observed with satisfaction how his beard was growing on his chin, his lips and cheeks. He determined that they were much darker than the blonde of his head and much quicker growing than he had suspected. On Friday afternoon he sent a short letter to the director.

“Meet me tomorrow at noon in the laboratory.”

The director came— and found nothing. Jan Olieslagers was gone, taking a few things with him. A search was immediately organized and they searched very hard for the Fleming. They searched everywhere in the forty-eight states. Everywhere—only not in the little cemetery of Andernach.

Jan Olieslagers had left in the night, shortly before sunrise. Stephe was waiting for him and immediately helped him to change clothes. A pair of big soldier shoes, heavy trousers, a blue sweater, jacket, hat and overalls were all laid out.

They required a couple hours of work, so that everything seemed a little dirty and worn. As soon as the old grave digger came out of his house, Jan Olieslagers went up to him and asked for a job.

“Where are you from? How did you get here?” asked the old man. “Who sent you?”—but he didn’t expect any answer and continued quickly,

“Do you speak German?”

“Yes,” said the Fleming.

The old man rubbed his wrinkled hands.

“I thought so! You want to stay low, because of the war?—that’s all right with me!—twenty a week—I’ll call you Mike.”—

Then he called through the bushes, “Stephe! Stephe!”

When he came the old man said, “Here is a new one. His name’s Mike, like the earlier one.—you can take him along to work with you.”

Stephe grinned, “Yes, Herr!”

But something held the old man back.

“Where do you live Mike?”

The Fleming said, “I don’t know. Can’t I have the room the other Mike had?”

“So you just came?” Grumbled the old man. “Early train?”—that seems reasonable – and you’re already here! No, you can’t have Mike’s room—he lived in the city with his wife!—you have to look around tonight —you should find something.”

The new Mike asked, “Isn’t there an empty room out here someplace?”

The old man shook his head.

“No, not at all. Everyone lives in the city. Only Stephe lives here.”

At that Stephe jumped in, “He can live with me.”

So Jan Olieslagers moved in with Stephe, into the little room in the back of the charnel house, in the middle of the cemetery of Andernach in Egypt land. He made the room a little more comfortable to live in, sent Stephe into the city for a field cot and a couple of other things. He also pulled some wires and connected them to the ones in the charnel house so that he could have a little lamp he could turn on to read with in bed.

Stephe showed that he was a very good friend. He was always up a half hour earlier, bringing water, cleaning clothes and shoes. He made all the little excursions into the city.

They always worked together and Stephe helped his friend with the unaccustomed work. During that week Jan Olieslagers didn't notice anything unusual about Stephe.

Then, one evening, Jan Olieslagers noticed certain unrest in Stephe. That afternoon he had some free time, and for the first time did a little running around through the streets of the city. His beard had grown thick in the meantime; and he didn't need to fear being recognized. When he came back Stephe was sitting on his bed talking to himself. In front of him stood an uncorked full bottle of whiskey.

"Do you drink, Stephe?" He asked.

"No, Mike," stammered Stephe.

Now he called him Mike all the time, like the others did. Then after a while he continued:

"It's for you, Herr!"

He stood up with difficulty, completely unable to repress his excitement.

Olieslagers thought, "I better drink. He wants to get me drunk."

He smiled.

"Come my friend, let's drink."

They sat down, mixed the glasses and drank. Stephe scarcely nipped at his, it didn't appeal to him at all. But Olieslagers obliged his friend, and drank with gusto. First he chatted about the city, what he had seen there. Then he spoke of other things, told him about New York and other cities. Stephe tried very hard to listen to him as well as he could, although

whatever he was preoccupied with would not release him for even a moment.

Slowly the Fleming felt a light drunkenness and exaggerated it to his heart's delight. He laughed, sang, stood up and staggered. Finally he acted very tired and threw himself down onto the bed. He reached for a book, saying that he still wanted to read a bit, and asked Stephe to put another full glass next to his bed. He emptied it gradually and read a bit, while Stephe slowly undressed.

Olieslagers felt how he was watching him, not taking his eyes away for one moment. Finally he let his book fall, closed his eyes, yawned, sighed and turned around. Then he played possum; acting as if he were asleep.

Stephe sat next to him on the bed, took his hand, lifted it, let it fall and blew lightly on his eyelids. Then, convinced that his friend really was fast asleep, he turned out the light. Slowly Olieslagers opened his eyes, but he saw nothing—it was dark in the room. Yet he heard quite clearly how Stephe dressed himself again, item by item. First the trousers, then the boots —then softly, so softly, the sweater and jacket.

Then Stephe went through the room, opened the door, pulled out the key, went out and locked it from the other side. His steps sounded as if he walked through the charnel house—and from there to the cemetery. Then everything was quiet.

Should he follow after him? The door was locked, but he could climb through the window. Yet, by the time he could get dressed Stephe would be long gone from the cemetery. And it was clear that Stephe wanted to protect himself from any observation. That was why he had brought the whiskey, that was why—

And he needed Stephe—he was his protector now and must remain his friend, not become his enemy. If he was entirely certain that Stephe

wouldn’t notice anything—

But he would notice. He was always suspicious and completely sober, while he, himself was still drunk enough that he could not be certain about making any noise. No, it would be much better if he quietly remained here.

Then he heard steps again outside and listened sharply. The door to the charnel house opened, and then closed again. Something was going on inside, a pacing, a shuffling.

And then once more, nothing. Then a soft speaking, which he could not make out, then quiet again. It went on like that for hours. The noise went back and forth, and he couldn’t figure it out. Then more talking. He believed that it was Stephe’s voice, but perhaps that was only because he presumed that Stephe was out there. He could not even determine how many people there were. The words that reached his ears were broken, and often he had to wait a half hour for even one. And he could not understand a single thing.

Finally again came the thudding of heavy steps, the opening of the door to the cemetery—this time it remained open. And the footsteps echoed from outside—

Jan Olieslagers sat upright in bed; his mind working intensely. When he heard nothing, nothing at all any more, he sighed; breathed deeply as if released. Then he stared into the darkness for long minutes, until he finally allowed himself to fall back asleep.

Stephe was standing in front of him when he woke up. He had pulled the covers back a little, moving his arm with infinite caution.

“Get up, Herr!” He urged. “It is high time.”

He handed him some clothes, gave him water to wash up. While dressing, Olieslagers observed him. Stephe looked clean and freshly washed. As they went out to work, he threw a quick glance back at the

charnel house—it looked exactly the same as it had the evening before. The old sacks back in the corner, and the picks and spades in the front, where they always put them and picked them up in the morning, placed back in the evenings and took out again in the mornings.

Stephe said nothing about his nightly excursion. Yet—there were a few flowering branches lying around.

That morning they had to work hard, three new graves had to be dug out. While the spades dug in, throwing loamy clods out of the grave, and bit by bit digging deeper into the earth, Jan Olieslagers thought about it. He searched through his memories from the time that he had come back home yesterday evening. But as he searched—he scarcely found anything graspable. Stephe had wanted to get him drunk, that was completely clear, wanted that for some singular purpose, so that he would be fast asleep and not notice what had been going on there during the night.

But what had been going on there? Stephe went out—and after a while had come back, with whom? Someone? With two others? He had heard steps—but couldn't say how many people there had been. He had heard talking—but only a few unintelligible words with long pauses in between—and only once had he been definitely able to identify Stephe's voice. In any case, Stephe had visitors. Even that might not be true. Stephe often enough talked to himself, when there was not another mother's soul around—and it was the same kind of speech, the softest whisper, little more than the movement of his lips in support of some heavy thought.

Stephe had had a visitor, that was certain, and a visitor as well, that he wanted to keep completely secret. That was also the reason that he remained here in this graveyard in Egypt land—this nightly visitor in the charnel house!

How that sounded—”This nightly visitor in the charnel house!” Jan Olieslagers smiled—if you lived right next to it, there was nothing gruesome about it. The corpses were always locked up in the little chapel, on the other end of the cemetery. Only in very rare cases, from accidents, suicides or criminals, was the charnel house used. As long as he had been here, there had only been one single time when the corpse of an old man had been brought there—and that had only been for two hours in the afternoon. The charnel house was essentially nothing but an empty room, which apparently could be used to—but couldn’t another empty room be used?

Jan Olieslagers considered everything that he knew about Stephe. He had never seen him speaking with any strangers. Really, he looked at all the women and all the girls, and smiled at them—but never spoke with them and didn’t know any of them. He spoke occasionally with the old gravedigger and with the other help, but only when he had to. When it was necessary; when it was needed for work. Only with him alone had he now and then spoken about other things.

Yet, it was certain; he was not Stephe’s only friend. Stephe had another one. Occasionally, in secret.

And more strongly than ever the Fleming was seized with a hot desire: He must find it. Must discover what occupied this brain, which dug alongside him.

In those weeks he spoke very little with Stephe. The thought would not leave him, sunk its claws into him, and wouldn’t let him go. For days he ran around like a sleepwalker; at nights he lay sleepless in his bed, always possessed with this tormenting thought: I must find it. And this torment

grew stronger with every hour; the mystery of the other corrosively ate into his skull.

Stephe noticed very well; stared at him fearfully, for long minutes at a time.

Once, in the middle of working, he shoved his spade into the earth and asked suddenly:

"What torments you, Herr?"

At that Jan Olieslagers said, "Why should I lie? It is the same thing that torments you, Stephe!"

Stephe didn't answer. He stood there unmoving. Finally a moan broke out from deep in his chest. But not a word. Not the smallest word.

One evening while Stephe was preparing the meal, the Fleming lifted his suitcase off the bed. He opened it, searched around inside and took out his shaving kit. He opened the little box, screwed the thing together, and played around with it. It was a pretty thing, gold-plated, glinting brightly—

Then he thought, what was he going to do with it? He had to think for a while before it occurred to him. Ah yes, for Stephe!

"Stephe," he cried. "Come here!"—

He shoved the thing into his hand.

"Take it, it will make you happy. I don't need it now. But you shave every day and your razor is dull and full of nicks."

"No, no!" stammered Stephe.

Olieslagers insisted.

"Yes, you must take it. Didn't you give me everything that I wear on my body? Aren't I your friend?"

Stephe didn't thank him. They ate silently, and went silently to bed. But the next morning the Fleming saw from his bed, how Stephe opened his

little shaving kit; how he took a new blade, and very comfortably shaved. He cleaned every single part carefully.

“Hand me my suitcase!” said Jan Olieslagers.

Then he took out the powder box and the soap brush.

“Here Stephe, I forgot these. They belong with it.”

—They had to work hard those days; people were still being recruited as soldiers, and it appeared that more people were dying than usual. They had to go out early to close the open graves, and then dig new holes and lay the coffins in them with a short service for the deceased. It was very late before they were finished. They noticed the names of those that they had buried the day before, repeated them in the evening at supper, as an indicator of all the work which they had accomplished. Then they forgot them again.

“Orlando Sgambi, 58 years old; Jan Srba, 22 years old; Ferencz Kovacz, 60 years old,” said Jan Olieslagers.

Stephe nodded, “Anka Savicz, 19 years old; Alessandro Venturini, 78 years old; Ossip Si—”

“Yes, yes!” grumbled Stephe and poured the tea. “Eleven today, eleven.”

The Fleming felt the work in all his bones. He hadn’t had much sleep the last few weeks, now he was falling down tired.

“Should we sit for a while on our bench?” Stephe asked.

“No,” he answered. “I’m going to bed.”

“Good,” said Stephe. “Me too.”

They undressed. Olieslagers watched Stephe still doing chores, brushing his clothes, polishing his boots. Then he lay down as well; the

Fleming heard his quiet breathing, then as always, a soft whispering in his sleep.

And he fell asleep himself, solidly.

In the middle of the night he woke up. He heard something—listened, tiredly rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. Someone was talking. He listened toward Stephe's bed—no, it wasn't coming from there. Then nothing—then suddenly, two, three cut off words. Close by, from the charnel house. And it was Stephe's voice, who was talking. He tore off the covers, threw out his legs, and sat on the edge of the bed. Then footsteps close by, a shuffling and dragging. And then another loud word from Stephe—

But what did he say?

Then the door to the charnel house opened—he heard the footsteps outside. Instantly he was up and ran to the window, tore it open. There he saw Stephe walking through the summer night. He carried something heavy in his arms, wrapped in white linen—ah, a woman!

And Jan Olieslagers understood, in a tenth of a second—

"Anka Savicz", he murmured, "19 years old. Anka Savicz—"

He closed the window with both hands, tightly. He felt the coolness of the night on his bed warmed body, and shivered, his teeth chattering. Listened.

Finally once more—Stephe's footsteps. He turned halfway around, but Stephe didn't come in—the footsteps went around and around the charnel house. Then a squeak and a growl—the handle of the old pump. And the water poured loudly into the bucket. A rubbing and scrubbing sound. The splashing of water. And more footsteps. Then the door to the charnel house opened—then it closed. Three steps—and the door opened.

He didn't see Stephe, couldn't recognize anything in the darkness.

"Anka Savicz—" he whispered. "Where is she?"

And out of the darkness someone spoke:

“At home.”

He understood very well. At home—here—in her coffin—and in her grave—

He didn’t answer. He went to bed, buried his head in the pillows, and pulled up the covers. His temples throbbed and his lips trembled. Then he bit his teeth together. Sleep, he thought, sleep, sleep!

Stephe understood that he had to speak now. But it didn’t happen that day, or the next, or even the next day; yet it seemed to the Fleming that he just needed to wait, before asking, before questioning. But he didn’t ask. He gave him a couple of silk neckties, a leather belt, a beautiful knife, and all kinds of little things that made Stephe’s eyes glow. He sat with him on the bench in the evenings after work, told him long stories—it was as if his friend, who had been closed away for so many years, was now slowly learning how to listen. And finally—to speak for himself.

Then, as Stephe began to talk, it was difficult and infinitely tiring. What Jan Olieslagers later wrote down on a few pages was the result of long weeks. Stephe lacked completely any sense of connection—and the simplest clarifying questions the Fleming asked at times, often confused him so much, that he was not in any condition to take up the thread again. Even if the phenomenon of this soul’s life had developed in an entirely logical way—Stephe still didn’t understand even a little bit of it.

He stood there as if in front of a remarkable puzzle:

which appeared to him alone as completely natural, understandable and proper. But he didn’t have the slightest understanding of cause and effect, often barely capable of distinguishing what had really happened, and what he had only experienced in his brain. As for that, several fictional things

were fixed solidly in his memory, while other highly important things had completely disappeared, and it seemed entirely hopeless for him to ever recall them again. Stephe could not remember either his father's or his mother's names, but could remember very well the name of one of the teachers at his school—one that he had never been instructed by. A job as dish washer in a hotel in St. Louis—a job, which he didn't have for three days, during which time nothing either ordinary or extraordinary occurred—he remembered it quite clearly, could describe exactly, how the room looked, where he worked, who worked with him, yes, he could even describe the designs on the plates—even though that had been eleven years ago. On the other hand he could not say two sentences about his life as a cowboy in Arizona, even though he had worked there for almost a year, and that was just shortly before he had found his job as a gravedigger.

Jan Olieslagers made notes every evening over the things that Stephe told him and every night organized and corrected the growing material. It seemed to him as if he were working with an ancient language, which was written in a strange code, whose key no one knew. He had to laboriously guess at letter after letter—then would find a word—and finally a sentence—

It was true that this work was a great joy to the Fleming—who like an explorer, succeeds in discovering a rare horrible flower in a tropical rain forest. One whose name is only known to a very few—and which is only rarely seen even once in a century. Νεκροφιχη (Nekrofichi) was the name of his flower.

The attorney would have called it a crime; a medical doctor lunacy. For Jan Olieslagers it was neither one nor the other. The thought of considering Stephe's actions on moral or aesthetic grounds never even occurred to him.

He understood that in order to understand them, there was only one possibility, to think with Stephe's brain and to feel with his psyche.

And that is what he tried to do.

So this is what the Fleming wrote down—even though it is incomplete, even though it may contain several mistakes—yet much more of it originated out of Stephe's soul, than that of Jan Olieslagers.

Howard J. Hammond from Petersham, Mass. knew little about women. During the time he was traveling as a coal stoker on Lake Michigan, he once visited a bordello with a comrade. A year later, as he was working in a coal mine in Kansas, he once more had relations with a woman. At the time he was living in the same room as a married friend; who was a regular miner that always worked the night shift deep in the mine. But Hammond worked during the day, for days at a time. And it happened, understandably so, that the woman was found in bed with him one morning by her husband. She was in no way young or beautiful—absolutely not.

Still once or twice more in his life he had, for a very short time, known a woman. But there was never the feeling of pleasure, of joy, that awoke any love in him.

That only lived and breathed—after Howard Jay Hammond became a grave digger.—one morning—as the tender spring sun kissed the young leaves—Stephe stood in a grave, in which he had just lowered a coffin. Previously he had never listened to what the reverend said—this morning he listened attentively. It seemed to him that the man was making a special sermon—just for him. The pastor spoke, what they always speak of at an open grave. But then came something that was meant for Stephe.

Oh, the troubles of the parents, and the inconsolable widower! Oh, both small orphans, left behind! Oh, this blossom of womanhood, broken by raw

storm winds in early years! The pious man raised his voice, wiped his lips, sobbed silently and portrayed vividly the pain of the relatives, friends and the entire assembly. He gave an image of this young woman, described the virtues of her soul: as benefactor and believer; her love of children, love of spouse, love of a mother. He praised in glowing colors the goodness and beauty and the rare charm of the deceased—

That was it.

(Jan Olieslagers wrote down: “Did this shepherd of souls completely realize at the time that he was playing the great Galeotto? He, the most infamous coupler of all time?”)

This phrase stuck in Stephe’s brain: “The goodness and beauty and the rare charm of the deceased.”—He was supposed to close the grave that evening. He stood in the grave, lifted out the wreath and the flowers that had been placed on the coffin, and then noticed that one, two screws in the coffin were loose.

That often happened. Mechanically he took the screwdriver from out of his pocket to screw them back in. But he put the tool on another screw and loosened it instead of tightening it. He didn’t do it—something inside him did it. He loosened all the screws and lifted the lid from the coffin.

Then he stared at the dead woman.

What did she look like? Stephe had long since forgotten, presumably already in the next quarter hour. In his memory lived only the banal words of the reverend and it was only with them that he could describe her to his friend: “The goodness and the beauty and the rare charm of the deceased.”

Stephe stared at the dead woman. A lock of hair had fallen over her face, which he pushed back. (The color?—Oh no, he didn’t remember the color.) But his hard finger touched the pale cheek, moved up and down over her face, first one hand, then both.

Then he closed the coffin, tightened down all the screws, climbed out of the grave and then closed it.

That was Stephe's first tender adventure in the garden of love. Up until then Stephe had been completely indifferent to whom it was that was being buried. Something dead lay there in the coffin and he had to shovel the dirt over it.

But then he listened to the words that the man spoke at the grave. Or else, often enough, not at the grave, but in the little chapel at the north end of the cemetery. Many services were held there instead; and the laid out coffin often remained there over night, to be removed before the next service.

And sometimes they were young women and girls—

He was the only employee that lived inside the cemetery; it was his duty, every evening before going to sleep, to make one last round; also to look in the chapel.

He went into the chapel. He stepped up close to the coffin, looked at the dead women. He straightened out the flowers, smoothed some wrinkle on a blouse.

And slowly, infinitely slowly, through long nights, he learned, like a half grown boy, the caresses of love.

He learned from quiet teachers, quiet, soft, and very gracious. The raw groping of his hard hands became tender caresses; from his lips came unconscious tender sounds, sometimes even words. He tenderly touched those pale cheeks, foreheads, even the hands. But he never lifted the eyelids. Everything came entirely by itself. He never consciously did this or that; he just did it—and he only became conscious of doing it after it had happened.

His hand caressed the throat and nape of the neck. His trembling fingers pushed the lilacs back, fearfully groping over the swelling breasts—then, once, he bent down his head and his mouth kissed—

He didn't know what it was that he kissed that first time. Perhaps the shoulder—or the cheek—or—

He didn't know what it was. It was a very great moment in his life, but he didn't know what it was.

Stephe cut flowers in the cemetery and brought them in the night to his lovers. He pushed the others to the side and put *his* flowers in their hands—

Once, when they still lived, these women belonged to other people, to parents, spouses and lovers, but not to anyone any more, only to him. Stephe felt very strongly about this; they came to him, belonged to him, and to him alone in all the world.

Yet it was not rulership, not tyrannical. They were not creatures, his to command according to his moods—they were strange beings whom he served. And they—despite that—were his, belonged to him and to him alone.

The first that invited him to a bridal night was young and black haired. He knew that she had black hair—but he had forgotten her name. She had not lain in the chapel in her coffin, but was already in her open grave.

Stephe went to her in the night, loosened the cover—and it was very difficult work, because it was a cheap and badly made coffin and because in addition to the screws were many bent nails.

The black haired woman lay there. He gave her his flowers. He caressed her and covered her with tender kisses. He spoke softly to her.

Then she asked him, "Take me with you!"

“How did she ask you?” Jan Olieslagers asked.

And Stephe said: “She asked.”

“Did her lips move?”

Stephe shook his head.

“Did she ask with her eyes?”

But no, no—he had never once opened their eyes, never.

“Then how did she ask you Stephe? Then how?”

But there was no other answer. “She asked me—she asked.”

She asked him—so he lifted her up, carried her over the quiet path of the cemetery, into the charnel house. Then he laid her down on old sacks—

That was their marriage bed.

But he spread many narcissuses over them. Dead women love flowers —

She was the first, the black haired one. Then came one that was named Carmelina Gaspari—that was her, the one that gave him the coral necklace.

“She gave it to you?”

Stephe nodded.

“How? How did she give you the necklace?”

He didn’t know. He looked around helplessly.

“She—gave—it—to—me.”

And a blonde came. Then one with red hair. One named Milewa, then one—

They didn’t need to ask any more; now Stephe knew. He went out into the night, to the grave or to the chapel; took his booty, and carried her over to the charnel house, and then held her for that one night.

He never forgot to spread flowers. And what was strange, was that they would tell him which flowers they wanted. One wanted roses, but only very red ones; another wanted lilies; the tall stemmed and snow white ones

which grew behind old Pawlaczek's house. One requested Jasmine, and another a large bouquet of wisteria that grew all over the city; deep blue Iris from the old graves of the Germans, linden blossoms from the tree above their bench, laburnum, which grew next to the tower—

But they never, never wanted any tuberoses.

They "told" him—like they "asked" him, like they "gave" him. They spoke the language of the dead—and Stephe understood.

Stephe was a child when he came to Andernach in Eygptland. One woman made a boy out of him—brought out the love in his heart—with her "goodness and beauty, with the rare charm of the deceased."

Then he saw for the first time with astonished eyes.

And a youth grew out of that boy in those quiet nights in the chapel. He learned the dreams of the dead.

Now Stephe was a man—now he knew; knew with certainty and conviction.

Those outside—they were different. He didn't understand them. That didn't matter to him; they could stay just as they were. His world was here—in the cemetery of Andernach. And this world was only created for him and belonged to him alone; simple and without reproach.

He, Stephe was its only master. But then new mysteries were revealed to him. He never searched, never dug, like his friend the Fleming did. It was revealed to him that the flowers in the graveyard around him were the answers to all puzzles. The open rose smiled at him for hours, on good days. Nothing ever appeared strange and miraculous to him. Everything was so simple, so clear. Only flowers were needed; that was all.

And the Fleming thought:

Sometimes there are those whose love is so strong, that it extends beyond life, even into the realm of death itself; so strong that the dead, for a little while, are drawn back to the life of the living. Many poets have sung about this. Helge, the heroic slayer, had to return from the land of the dead, back to his burial hill where Sigrun awaited him. He had to, had to, because he was pulled back by her great love. The dead hero embraced his wife for one night.

And the mother that called back her little dead son in “burial clothing” night after night—just like Sigrun called back her husband. Lenore, who in the morning awoke in terror from wild dreams and who’s longing brought dead Wilhelm back to life. Poe’s shadowy figures, Ligeia and Morella, who —strangely!—were only other names for his “Lost Lenore”.

Jan Olieslagers didn’t need the legends and the poems. He had often heard about such cases and knew of a few very well himself. There was his cousin. She was young, scarcely eighteen, when her husband, a handsome Lieutenant, died in a racing accident. As a widow she was very quiet and peaceful, making no great effort and simply living her life. Only, on the 20th of every month as evening fell, she locked herself into the little Indian room in her parent’s home. That was the day and the room, in which she had first been engaged. And then, as twilight fell, her lover came. Her love pulled him back from the realm of the dead and brought him back to life for one short hour. Only a few knew about it; her parents, her cousin and a few friends.

His cousin was completely healthy and normal. Not the slightest thought of her dead husband came out into daily life at any time. Just this one hour in the month—

Later, ten years later, she made the acquaintance of another, and married him—since then she didn’t go into the room any more. She had

three children, and was happy enough. But she never forgot it. When she, after a long interval, saw her cousin again, she spoke to him about it. Only with him.

Then he told her, softly, these lines from the novella:

"Oh suck, beloved, deeply on me,
So that I can fall asleep and live.
I feel the rejuvenating flood of death,
My blood transforms into balsam and aether.
I live the day full of belief and courage
And die at night in holy passion."

She didn't answer. She reached out silently and held his hand.

Jan Olieslagers thought about that often these nights. That it was all built upon strong emotion that would not allow any other thought or feeling to come near. Unhappiness—ach, wasn't it more like intense happiness?—to be possessed by this wild fire, denying death, forging a will of steel, each time giving birth from out of themselves the lost dead; finding, like Orpheus, the key to the door of shadows, and seeking out Eurydice. The intense will to live extends into the realm of the dead. That was the secret.

But this was different.

Stephe was Master in the garden of death. But now he was growing, growing—and his power had become so great that it extended itself far into all life.

That first happened when they buried the Stolinsky brothers, two Polish miners that had died in a cave in. Stephe's gaze fell upon a young

girl that was standing right beside the graves. He looked at her for a long time, and then he smiled.

He knew: “She will come to me. She belongs to me.”

From then on he carefully observed the lines of mourners, whom he had never paid the slightest attention to before. They liked to hide behind black jackets and skirts—yet Stephe still found them.

And he watched the women and girls that came to the cemetery to decorate the graves. He watched each of them, measured them carefully. Sometimes he smiled; that was when he felt; “They will be coming to me.”

And when he went for rare visits into the city he looked at the women; up and down the streets, behind the doors and windows.

“That one there,” he whispered, “that one there!”

But his greatest day came just before Easter; that was the day of the dead. All the graves were decorated and crying women stood by them. Then Stephe went over the path, hour after hour, and then remained standing for a little while, looking around and smiling.

A great market for love—many good wares. But only one person knew about it—he, Stephe.

Was it really only him?

It seemed as if the others also knew—the women and the girls. Didn’t really know—no. But they felt, sensed—something terrible. And it had something to do with the gaze of the grave digger and his smile.

In the following days Jan Olieslagers saw this gaze many times and this smile. He observed it carefully, much more closely than any of the others. But it was as if he was the only one that knew its meaning, he didn’t see one other person come forward, or any possible indication that others had some inkling of it as well.

There was nothing horrible about the gaze, nothing terrifying; the smile was not fake or devilish. It was a friendly, calm gaze and a good natured smile.

Yet—the women and girls somehow sensed it. Yes, half grown children understood; little things with long fluttering hair and short skirts.

In the chapel, during prayer one young woman fainted beneath his gaze. It was just once, and Jan Olieslagers thought that perhaps there was another reason for it. Perhaps—but it was certain that the girls moved away whenever Stephe came. That the children—oh no, never the boys—hid behind their mother's skirts, that young mothers made the sign of the cross when they saw him. Even old women were afraid, startled and let out a short scream.

It went so far that the girls ran into the houses when Stephe went down the streets. Jan Olieslagers had no way of knowing whether they talked about it in the city because he avoided speaking with anyone there.

Only once did this strange fear of Stephe have consequences. As Stephe came home from work he saw a couple standing at a grave, a recruit and his girl. Her back was turned to him as she broke off a couple branches of ivy. Suddenly, as if she had felt his gaze, the young girl quickly straightened up, turned around and screamed. The soldier, hearing her cry of fear, seeing his bride pale and tremble, asked:

"What is it?"

She pointed at Stephe and whispered:

"That one there! Him!"

Then he went up to Stephe with a balled fist and screamed at him:

"You God damned scoundrel—how dare you, my bride—my—"

But he never finished his sentence. Stephe never responded and his gaze was so calm and mild, that no one could find anything cheeky or

insulting in it. The soldier interrupted himself, let his arm sink, and stammered:

"Excuse me, Herr—I'm sorry!"

Stephe went calmly on his way.

Apparently Stephe was scarcely aware of his strange power. He only knew how it was, but placed no further value on it, and didn't trouble himself about it. It was true: he smiled—but his smile was certainly not one of conscious pride or proud satisfaction. And not once was Jan Olieslagers able to discern even the smallest sign of conscious and deliberate willfulness.

When he, in his meditations, called upon Stephe, the great master of death in the land of Andernach, the inescapable tyrant—it was only from out of his brain and not from out of Stephe's emotions. Everything seemed complicated only when he thought about it, yet it became simple and natural, the more he tried to enter into Stephe's idea world. When he removed every restraint—and it was entirely certain that Stephe had none —, then his thoughts and actions became those of a child, a quiet child, that played a game of his own. One so strange, so immensely real, that it appeared to the worldly man Jan Olieslagers like the deeds of a black god.

All of these women and girls were like buds. They grew and matured and only revealed themselves at fullest bloom—that was when they died; one today and another tomorrow. That was when they came out of the city, here to him. They blossomed for him alone, for Stephe. And Stephe, who loved flowers, violated them—

Then the blossoms wilted—and Stephe threw them away. Forgot them entirely. He didn't know any of their graves, not one—

"That is very strange," thought Jan Olieslagers.

"Where does Carmelina Gaspari rest?" he asked.

Stephe shook his head, “I don’t know.”

“How about Milewa?—or Anka Savicz?”

No, no, Stephe didn’t know where even one of the graves were. It never occurred to him to decorate even one of them with flowers. That was the gardener’s job. But he knew where the resting place of the old German, Jacob Himmelmann was, or that of the industrialist J. T. Campbell—oh, he knew where a whole bunch of graves were.

“He is very untrue!” thought Jan Olieslagers. And then considered:

“Is a child true to its playthings? It loves them with all its love—and the next minute throws them away.”

Then also:

“Is a god true to those things with which it plays?”

Yet a god is true, just like a child is. And if one day, Stephe was ever untrue, then his divinity would fall away from him, and all of his childhood. And he would become a human. And feel like a human. And act like a human. Then everything would be destroyed.

That happened in late Indian summer, which in Egypt land lasted late into November. Up until then he lived, even though being closer to Olieslagers, his own life of the night.

He felt relieved after all his confessions. His friend was a good confessor and Stephe sensed very well how much his friend had wanted to know his secret. He always remained the servant, always fulfilled every smallest service that he could think of for his friend. He searched out mushrooms for him from the meadows and large blackberries, put flowers on his table. He soon noticed how much value the Fleming placed on cleanliness and was careful that that everything was always shiny clean.

This went so far, that Stephe, who through twenty long years, had never troubled about being dirty or clean, now kept his own body washed and clean, not out of some instinct, but only out of love for his friend.

They lived close together during this time. And Stephe was only alone during such nights—

Then he would say to his friend:

“She will come to me tonight!”

The Fleming would ask:

“Which flowers does she want?”

“Water lilies,” said Stephe, “from the little pond.”—or else:

“Lilacs, many lilacs!”

They would go out together to get them. They carried them into the charnel house, spread the old sacks on the stone floor and scattered the flowers over them.

Then Olieslagers would go into the room, go to bed and try to sleep, read, smoke, or play chess with himself. Even listen—against his will—

He tried several times. But it didn’t work, didn’t work at all.

Then on one such night he ran around, through the cemetery and across the meadow. And another time he pulled his bed outside, placed it in the little honey suckle arbor, and laid down there. But he didn’t sleep. He kept thinking he heard sounds coming from the charnel house. Believed he saw —

Once he thought about it:

“It is just because I don’t see it—so it enchants my imagination. I have seen worse things than that—and it hasn’t done me any harm. I will go inside, will watch—then my nerves will calm down.”

He hurried to the charnel house. He grabbed the latch and held it in his hand. He didn’t open it. Went past it—heard Stephe’s voice—came back.

Five times—six times—

Finally he cursed, and opened the door powerfully. The little bulb lit the room. He saw a figure lying on the sacks, among yellow roses. And Stephe knelt in front of her.

He called out to him. But Stephe didn't hear him, just as he hadn't heard the door open. He stepped up closer, so he could see the face of his friend clearly.

Stephe stared at the dead—all his features were tense. He clenched his hands together—it was apparent that he was listening intently. Then a soft "Yes" came from his lips and then once more, "yes"—

Ah, the dead was talking to him—and Stephe was listening.

A quarter hour—a half hour—Jan Olieslagers leaned against the wall, softly counting, in order to pass the time away. But it didn't work.

"Yes," whispered Stephe. —

And once more he heard:

"My love."

Then a spasm came over Stephe's body. He bent forward and backward. Sounds came from his lips, confused, broken, and unintelligible.

Jan Olieslagers bit his teeth together, clasped his hands, and closed his eyes, in order to gather all of his strength. Something was happening there in front of him, and he had to find out what it was.

Again it rang out:

"Yes!"

Louder than before.

The Fleming looked up. There he saw, how the dead sat upright, beckoning Stephe with both arms. But he also saw—at the same time—, that she was lying still and stiff on the sacks, as before. That she had not

moved and was very dead. And yet she lived and moved and offered both arms to her lover and her naked breasts—

Jan Olieslagers grabbed his temples with both hands. He saw one thing and at the same time saw the other.

He saw both, both—

He backed away, toward the door, slowly, step by step—

He saw how Stephe raised his arms, spread them, like the dead did, exactly the same. How he bent forward, as she did, pushed his head forward —as she was doing—

She—even though she lay motionless, rigid and stiff on the floor—

Then Stephe cried out. He grabbed for her with both hands, pulled her towards him, and fell upon her—

Jan Olieslagers ran over the path, came to the gate, and climbed over it. He remained standing, gasping for breath. Then, with long strides, he went around the cemetery. He circled it, three times and then once more.

"Just like a watchdog," he thought.

He considered what he had just seen; and soon found an explanation.

What he, Dr. Jan Olieslagers, had seen, was what had happened. It was the dead, the dead that lay there. But what he had seen at the same time: the dead, sitting upright, opening her arms and beckoning Stephe to her—he hadn't seen that with his eyes.

For all these weeks he had tried to sink into Stephe's soul, to feel as he did, in order to understand the miracle. And in this night, he saw as Stephe saw—felt as Stephe felt. Now he understood completely what Stephe meant when he said:

"She gave me the coral necklace."

Or:

“She asked me—”

Or:

“She said—”

It had really happened: These dead spoke to Stephe. And Stephe listened, and did, as they requested.

What did it matter, that he, Olieslagers, also saw that this reality was a lie? At the same time saw—as if in a hallucination. It was a lie only for him—and yet the only reality for Stephe.

And—perhaps—the last. Because then it happened, Stephe became untrue.

It happened in the silliest, most banal, and stupidest way of all. Stephe fell in love. Fell in love, good and bad, like a store clerk or a young soldier does with a living, healthy and beautiful girl.

Her name was Gladys Paschitsch. An Egyptian child—but one from parents that were clever and had been very rich for a long time. Her father already had a pretty fortune before the war and during these years had multiplied it a hundredfold. The Italian Egyptians called him Pesce Cane and the others had their own names for him. The Americans called him “profiteer” and when the Germans had still lived in Andernach, presumably called him “grafter”. His dollar bills were greasy and dirty, from the sweat of work and from the blood and tears of his countrymen, as well as those of all the other Egyptians—but no less valuable for that. The Paschitsch family had long since become very American—that’s why they named their only daughter Gladys and also why they sent her to a popular finishing school for ladies in New England.

Stephe had seen her two years earlier when she had left for school. Now she was home on vacation.

An aviator had died; there was a small service in the chapel. There were many patriotic speeches for the hero, who apparently was not really a hero, but could have been one, and for that reason had certainly earned all the laurel wreathes that were scattered around.

Gladys Paschitsch was also there and presented a large wreath with giant streamers on it from the women's club. Stephe saw her there once more and fell in love with her.

It was not that he then acted like any other lover would have perhaps done. He didn't do anything different than he always did. He told his friend:

"She will come."

And so he waited for her.

But—and that was it—he thought only about her, and forgot all the others, neglected them, cared no more about them. He shoveled their graves closed as if they were empty, and scarcely glanced into the quiet chapel at night. And the charnel house remained empty.

Gladys Paschitsch left for college; came back home for a week at Christmas and then once more at Easter.

And Stephe remained true to her for all that time.

"She will come," he said.

During Easter Gladys came out to the cemetery one more time. An entire group of recruits from the nearby training compound had died—the women's club cared for those graves. So it came about that Stephe saw her.

It was certain that Gladys Paschitsch experienced the same feeling of fear that overcame all the women, when Stephe was near. But she was a "college girl", self-conscious, unattached and—educated. And she knew that it—was all stupid stuff. So once she went up to Stephe with firm steps and spoke to him.

Jan Olieslagers saw how she forced herself to speak calmly with him—completely innocent questions about the soldiers graves. Stephe remained still, almost collapsed. But despite that the hands of the student trembled, despite that she sighed in relief a few minutes as she said, “Good evening.”

“What did she say to you?” asked the Fleming.

Stephe murmured, “She will come—”

But it didn’t appear that Gladys Paschitsch was in any hurry about it. She remained very healthy and her step was firm and light.

—Jan Olieslagers was unsatisfied. Stephe bored him. And it all boiled down to the fact that this story about Stephe was still the only thing that brought a little variety into this rat trap, in which he was stuck. Once he tried to shake Stephe’s silly loyalty, told him a wonderful story, about how beautiful the dead woman was, that was now lying in the chapel—

Stephe shrugged his shoulders. What did that matter to him?

One day Jan Olieslagers came back from the city. He told him that he had seen Gladys with a captain. She was engaged, and would soon be married. No word of it was true, but he wanted to awaken Stephe’s jealousy.

But Stephe remained completely indifferent. That didn’t interest him at all. She could kiss another, give herself to another. But she would still come to him.

And the Fleming understood: Stephe loved Gladys Paschitsch, oh yes! But: In life he loved only—the agreeable dead.

Her alone. He waited for her through the long winter, through the spring and summer. He remained true to her and for her he fasted and chastised his body. Then she would come—she must come. He was certain about it.

And she came, Gladys Paschitsch.

Late that summer, during the last year of the war, an epidemic spread across the continent, which the people called the Spanish Influenza. It was just a flu, the newspapers said, a really dangerous one. Many corpses were black and blue—the newspapers didn't write anything about that. But everyone knew it. And the people died. And the grave diggers had lots to do.

The Spanish flu came to Egypt land as well. Also to Andernach. They gave old Pawlaczek a hundred soldiers to help. They cut boards, and put coffins together. They went through the city with their carts collecting the corpses; dug graves and closed them up. During the days, during the nights —uninterrupted. And Stephe and Mike and the others—each commanded a dozen American soldiers. The noise and singing; and the quiet cemetery resounded with their bellows. It was not very patriotic, what they were singing.

The old charnel house was overflowing with guests, as was the chapel; coffins were continuously brought inside and others carried out.

There was no more peace and quiet. Jan Olieslagers thought that perhaps a quiet prison cell might have been better. But Stephe smiled—the great death was here and she would come—she must come.

Every morning and every evening, when the Fleming read the newspaper, he had to look through the newspaper columns with the names of the deceased and had to read them out loud. Stephe knew her name: Gladys Paschitsch.

Yet it was not in these columns where Olieslagers first found the name. It was there on the first page—and it was an entire article about her. Her name rang completely throughout the city. She was sick, it read. Yet nothing serious to be afraid of. But by that evening she was dead.

Then Stephe panicked in a strange unrest and agitation that climbed with every hour. She must come—it was the strongest order of the Sanitary Police, that all corpses needed to be removed from the dwelling as soon as possible. But the morning passed, and the afternoon and the evening—

Then, after ten o'clock, old Pawlaczek came to the charnel house.

"Mike," he cried. "Stephe!"

Stephe put down the boiling tea kettle, his hands trembled.

"She comes," he whispered, "She comes."

He ran out with the boss. He was right.

"She came"—the procession from the city was already on its way. The heavy empire of Paschitsch was so important, that his will was able to make possible what had never been done before: a night service in the chapel. So the chapel needed to be cleaned out; the old man took Stephe along with, while he sent Mike out to fetch a dozen soldiers that were camped in quickly constructed tents by the cemetery gate.

They carried the full coffins out of the chapel and into the charnel house, stacked them there three or four high, one on top of the other, they slipped in the buckets with plants and growing things; they were used for each service, and put everything where it belonged. Finally the mourners came, one car after another. They unloaded the coffin, which had already been closed. Stephe knew it well: it was the expensive coffin richly decorated with silver, the one that had been on display in the coroner's show window in the city for years. Now it had finally found a buyer, and it seemed to Stephe that it had to be that way, and that no one else in the city was permitted to rest in that coffin.

But the service was not yet ready. They had to wait for the priest, then the prominent members of the women's club, then again—the cars went back and forth from the city.

It was after two o'clock, when they began; and then it lasted very long. Stephe stood with his friend in the door of the chapel, waiting. Suddenly he turned:

"I must cut flowers," he said.

Jan Olieslagers asked:

"Did she tell you?"

Stephe nodded:

"Yes. Gladiolas. Many gladiolas."

He came back with both hands full of flowers, and hid them in front of the door under a stone bench.

"Aren't they finished yet?" he asked.

But someone was still speaking, and then someone else—ach, this service was never going to end!

Finally the priest came out; he climbed into the first car with the parents. Infinitely slow the rest of the people came out and drove away. Others had to again wait a long time for the autos to return from the city to pick them up.

Stephe was so agitated that could not stand still for a single second, and he was constantly talking to himself. He was becoming very conspicuous.

"Go to your bench, Stephe! The Fleming advised. "I will wait here and when the last one is gone I will call you."

Jan Olieslagers sat down on another bench right next to the cemetery gate, once in a while he went up the path back into the chapel exactly like all the other mourners were doing. He saw the members of the women's club climb in, and then he saw a couple of soldiers carry a bright yellow chest to an auto and drive away with it. He also saw the director of the chemical factory; who walked right past and didn't recognize him.

Then old Pawlaczek stepped up to him.

“They are all gone,” he grumbled. “Lock the gate Mike.”

Jan Olieslagers jumped over the graves.

“The chapel is empty, Stephe.” He cried. “Come—she is waiting.”

Stephe stood up, and staggered.

“I want—” He began.

“What do you want?” pressed the Fleming.

“She wants it, she—,” stammered Stephe.

“What does she want then?”

And Stephe said:

“Not in the chapel—not in the charnel house. In—in our room—”

Olieslagers did not like that at all. He was very tired and wanted to sleep for a couple of hours—at least try to sleep. But Stephe’s eyes begged and pleaded, like a child’s eyes. He clapped him on the shoulder:

“Very well, Stephe, very well!—only be quick, look, it is already dawn! I will bring your flowers along with.”

“Thank you, Herr, thank you!” said Stephe.

Stephe ran into the chapel; the Fleming picked up the Gladiolas. He carried them across, scattered them over Stephe’s bed and on the floor. He moved his bed tight against the wall.

Then Stephe came, his entire body trembling—with empty arms.

“What happened?” asked Olieslagers.

And Stephe whispered:

“The coffin is empty!”

The Fleming thought for a moment. Ah, that was it, that was what the soldiers had carried out!

The large beautiful silver decorated coffin was only a show piece—and the dead was hidden inside the chest! Apparently it was going to be buried somewhere else—

He told Stephe about it; Stephe didn't understand at first. He had to repeat it twice until Stephe understood.

"Then where? Where?" He asked. "Where is she going to be buried?"

"How should I know that?" his friend answered.

Stephe stammered:

"I—I—" and then he went to the door.

"Where are you going?" the Fleming asked.

Stephe said:

"They have stolen her. I must find her."

He left.

Jan Olieslagers called after him, but the other didn't hear him. He considered:

"Now he is going to do something really stupid. I must protect him—he is my friend."

But what should he do? He got undressed, washed up; then got dressed again. He put a couple oranges in his pocket, put his hat on his head and went out. The cemetery gate was locked, he had the key in his pocket—so Stephe must have climbed over it. Thoughtfully he unlocked it and then locked it behind him. Then he took the road to the city—Stephe must be there.

He peeled his oranges and ate them. He considered. If Gladys Paschitsch wanted to be buried somewhere else, it certainly couldn't be in Andernach. This cemetery was the only one in the little city; there was no other possibility. But then—yes, then she must use the early train, the one that went to Chicago. He knew exactly the departure times of every single one of the few trains, was always prepared for the threat of discovery, to leave with the next train. 5:32 was the fast train.

He looked at his watch—he had to hurry. He walked faster, at times ran for a while—looked sharply up the straight road to see if he could find Stephe. But he didn't see him—he must certainly have run all the way to the city. He turned from the main road, and took a little shortcut to the train station. It was light enough to see now. He looked at the large clock on the train station, still eighteen minutes until departure.

He went through the waiting hall and across to the train platform. There were only a few people there, and he saw Stephe again, and another man that appeared to have something to do with the departure of the corpse. He went out to the street again—a couple of autos drove up. Men and women in black mourning clothes climbed out. He recognized father Paschitsch and his portly wife, he also recognized Dan Bloomingdale, the city attorney, whom he had often seen at the cemetery. An officer and a couple of soldiers climbed out of the next auto, and out of the third a lady and gentleman with a mourning wreath.

And he saw Stephe come running up across the wide area from behind the platform. He waved at him, and then followed the mourners into the hall of the train station. They all went into the waiting hall, just the soldiers hurried into the baggage room. He watched as they loaded the large chest onto a cart and took it to the train platform.

The train rumbled up, the soldiers pushed their cart into the baggage car; three gentlemen walked behind it, mourning wreathes hanging from their arms. The attorney spoke with the conductor, showed him the official documents authorizing the transport.

At that moment Stephe came up, completely out of breath, unable to speak a word. He moaned, sobbed, and grabbed for the chest with both hands.

"Hands away!" cried the officer.

Stephe tore at the coffin, as if he wanted to take it away with him. Foam dribbled from his lips, and a deep roar came out of his breast. Two soldiers seized him, Stephe pushed them back.

“Thieves!” he bellowed. “Thieves! Sons of whores!”

They threw themselves on top of him— a scream, pushing and tearing. They pulled him to the floor—but he bellowed again:

“Robbers! Sons of whores!”

But Dan Bloomingdale, the attorney, didn’t want any scandal.

“Let him go, people!” He commanded. “Don’t you see that he is deranged? A crazy lover!”

He turned to Stephe:

“Now my boy, what is it?—did you love her?”

In a minute Stephe appeared tame.

“Yes, Herr,” he stammered, “yes, Herr!”

“Well,” the attorney consoled him, “that is very understandable, she was a beautiful child—could very well have had many lovers! But you must see: now she is dead! Dead like a rat! Mouse dead!”

“Yes Herr, yes!” Stephe whispered very softly.

“Yes—”

Then he pulled himself together; shyly, like a boy, he asked:

“May I come along Herr?”

The attorney shook his head, people looked at him, and could see that he had a great sympathy for this wild lover.

“I don’t know, my boy—really, I don’t know, whether that would be permitted—perhaps—”

Stephe interrupted him with a new thought:

“Herr, if you just tell me where she will be buried, I will bring flowers —bring flowers there.”

The attorney grabbed his hand and shook it:

“You are an honest boy, really, an honest boy! Buried—well, she didn’t want to be buried, you see! We are going to Chicago—to a crematorium. She wants to be cremated!”

It was as if a heavy axe hit him on top of his head. Stephe staggered, bellowed like a steer, fell down and rolled around—one of the soldiers helped him up.

“Cre—cremat—!” he moaned. “No! She is not permitted—she doesn’t want that—not that—”

Dan Bloomingdale picked up the hat, which had fallen to the floor, and set it back on Stephe’s head.

“Yet, my boy, that is exactly what she wanted! I am an attorney, you see, and notary—I wrote her last will and testament! Look here”

He reached into his pocket and took out a document—

“Look here—she dictated that herself! She decided it, that she wanted to be cremated—”

Stephe tore his eyes wide open—and his lips—but no sound came out. They lifted the chest into the baggage car, and set Stephe carefully on their cart. He let his arms hang limp, and stared straight ahead.

The whistle for departure—people pressed into the car. Only the soldiers remained behind, and slowly walked away. The train left.

Jan Olieslagers stepped up to Stephe, and straightened him up.

“Come, Stephe, come!”

He led him into the waiting hall, and ordered coffee. But Stephe didn’t move.

“Come back home!” said the Fleming finally.

Stephe shook his head. Then he spoke, quietly and calmly—no, he would never again go back to the cemetery.

“Then where?” asked Olieslagers.

“I don’t know,” said Stephe.

“Should we leave?” said Olieslagers. “You and I—together? Somewhere else?”

He didn’t wait for an answer. He went back to the cemetery, packed his things and Stephe’s—two small suitcases. He came back to the city—and found Stephe unmoved from his chair.

“She betrayed me!” he murmured. “Betrayed—”

And he repeated these words, as if nothing else had a place in his brain.

Jan Olieslagers bought tickets for the ten o’clock train. He forced Stephe to eat a little, guided the cup to his mouth, and fed him, like a child —

“Betrayed—” whispered Stephe, “betrayed—”

They climbed onto the train. Jan Olieslagers said:

“We are going to Chicago. Later to Baltimore. There—”

Stephe answered:

“Betrayed—she betrayed me—”

The Fleming was very tired: He calculated back—it was now thirty hours since he had gotten any sleep. He leaned back and nodded off.

He kept waking up, and looking at his friend.

“Betrayed—”

He heard. And as he finally fell asleep, a very deep sleep, it rang in his ears:

“Betrayed—she betrayed me—be—tray—ed.”—

The porter shook him awake.

“Chicago!” he cried.

“Climb out Herr!”

Jan Olieslagers sat up.

“Where is Stephe?” he asked, “Where is my friend?”

“He got off!” said the porter. “In—in—”

He didn’t remember anymore. But it was four hours ago, or maybe five.

Jan Olieslagers looked around—Stephe’s little suitcase was gone too. He had taken that along—

He never saw him again.

The Lost Monkey

This story is so completely crazy that I would not believe it if someone told it to me. Nevertheless it happened to me a long time ago in Traben-Trarbach on the Mosel.

I got to know a pretty girl at a wedding in Saarbrücken; she was a bridesmaid, a friend of the bride, out of Wiesbaden. That is an evil twisted position no genuine young lady wants to be in and mine was no exception. She had been a maid for a long time and wanted to be a bride as soon as possible.

I told her that sometimes things don't go the way you wish and to be content if she could get them a different way.

How this concerns me; how I came to claim her as a bride in front of the Justice of the Peace at the county courthouse is not at all in question. I proposed and in my proposal I pledged to fulfill and satisfy her wish to become a bride to the utmost.

She was the daughter of a good family and found my proposal in the highest degree inappropriate, insulting, mean, sick and outrageous. She did not understand how I could dare offer such a proposal especially since I had only known her for two hours. I had made a really bad call and I should be ashamed…

She stopped her very beautiful speech and I told her that she was completely right. Less than six hours later we were married. We had such a fine time on our long wedding day but there was not a spark of possibility in Saarbrücken for the consummation of our marriage. The execution of our laudable intention gave way when we ran out of time. We were both idealistic, talented people and the consummation of our wedding needed to

end in a beautiful and romantic way or it would be a joke. We were not having a glittering show and this one thing was very important.

Our arrangement was that on the next day we would go back home. I would go back to Mosel and she would go to Koblenz. Then we would meet at a later time in the old Hotel Klaus-Feist in Traben-Trarbach. She would let me know when she could possibly make it.

The daughter of a really good family can always make anything possible if she wants and after two weeks I received a message to meet her at noon the next Saturday.

I was a husband strictly in principle and kept my promise. So on a gloomy October day I traveled down the Saar and the Mosel. At noon the next day I ran to the train station to meet her. She was not on that train or any of the others and at last I gave up on my little flower and turned my interest elsewhere.

In my leisure I made myself useful by helping an old lady at the train station to her apartment. She had been casting friendly eyes that had sought me out all day even though I had done nothing to deserve them or her. [[i]]

I was furious when I finally got to the hotel. My usual armorous mood had been transplanted with a compulsion of proper duty to my love. I'm glad to say that on the next morning as the sun laughed, I received a telegram that she was finally coming to meet me. She came that day and everything proceeded in the best fashion.

But this love adventure has nothing to do with my story. It only clarifies how I met the maiden from Weisbaden on the Mosel and ended up in Traben-Trarbach waiting one day to experience the highest permitted consummation of our marriage and also experienced something that I still today have no explanation of. I have seldom spoken a word of this personal

song of my life and the game we played. She requested me to be undercover for this night at least.

I was right spoiled on the wine from the Club at Saarbrücken. I also like a good Rheinländer and surrender myself to the mellow taste. But up and down the Rhein, Mosel, Ruwer and Saar you can't find a better wine than at the Hotel Klaus-Feist in Traben-Trarbach.

It was around nine-o-clock when I entered the bar. At the other end was placed a round table set up for the gentlemen of the city. Except for them I was the only guest. I dined through the evening.

And the wine, I began with a bottle of Ungsberger. Then I tried Trabener Rickelsberger, Then Gaispfad. It made me sad every time I had to separate from one brand to try another; but only as long as it took for the taste of the new to hit my mouth.

The Hühnerberger was such a fine wine I had to drink two bottles.

The door was shoved open and in came a curious it. (No dear reader, not guest, not curious guest. Really, it must be called a curious it.) This creature, if it can be certain that it was indeed human, wore human clothing and had an odd sexless quality.

It was very small and scarecrow thin. The black trousers and frock-coat nevertheless appeared too tight. The pant legs barely came up to the calves. The long hands stood out wide from the arms. A black round bowler hat scarcely covered the much too large half- head that sat upon a skinny neck. Horrible bristling black hair grew everywhere.

The creature wore a starched dirty collar with a black tie. The gray stubbled face appeared stretched over the bone with a massive protruding Adam's apple, sharp chin and nose, wide protruding ears and wild flickering black eyes.

This little fellow was sprayed with mud from head to toe as if he had spent the entire day in the rain at Weinberg loafing about. Even more curious, from every button of the battered double breasted frock-coat and the buttons below hung a dead mole, one or two or three.

The bartender appeared to know him well.

“Good evening Mr. Urz,” he greeted him.

The being looked at him but did not return the greeting. None of the gentlemen sitting near the Innkeeper looked concerned. He did not take his hat off and quietly sat at a table near me. Then he untied the black masses of moles from his buttons, lifted them up before him and shoved them together on the table. The bartender took them up and counted them.

“Nineteen.”

He nodded.

“I will put it on your account.”

The bartender left and came back after awhile bringing the ragged fellow some cold meat and cheese, bread and butter, and a half-pint of wine to go along with it.

The man ate. After consuming the last crumb he grabbed his glass and emptied it. He leaned back from the table and guzzled deep, guzzled, guzzled. An entire army of sighs croaked over his blue lips. At last the lips moved, first they whispered, murmured something. Then clear wretched words came out.

“I have lost my monkey!” Mr. Urz croaked in a high soprano.

Nothing else. He sat there, quiet, without moving, slurping his half-pint. When he was ready the bartender brought him a second without being asked.

I was absorbed in my Hühnberger which no one can drink without getting a glimpse of heaven in every swallow. If you drink enough you can

hear the lovely angels in heaven sing “Hallelujah”. Nothing disturbed my devotion.

Slowly one gentleman after another would stand, take up their hat, coat and umbrella and hurry out into the night. Every single one would turn and call out, “Good Night Mr. Urz”.

But he did not appear to hear. He sat and sucked on his wine. Sometimes he guzzled and off and on lamented his pitiful, “I have lost my monkey!”

It was around midnight when the Innkeeper escorted the last gentleman, the head ranger, through the door. Then he came to me. As soon as he sat down the still guest clamored in a high falsetto again about his lost monkey.

All my anger was long gone. I felt very at peace with my wine and wanted the world to be merry.

“Bring the man two bottles of Hühnberger!” I cried to the bartender. “If he has lost his monkey, I will gladly buy him a new one and a huge terrible drunk that should transform into a magnificent hangover in the morning.”

The bartender went. I presented the Innkeeper with a glass and he toasted back.

“See here,” he began. “That is our Mr. Urz.”

He was interrupted by the door opening and a late guest came in.

“Is no one else here?” he asked.

The Innkeeper rose to help him out of the difficult raincoat.

“They have already gone doctor,” he said.

“Foul weather outside,” cried the doctor. “And the axel broke, three hours running on foot. Hot stones, Innkeeper, I want to get warm!”

He was heavy, sixtyish, with a gray beard and a pince-nez on his nose. Intelligent and healthy, he was a true country doctor that set a good example

for his patients. The Innkeeper brought schnapps. The doctor got a large glass from behind the bar, gave the bartender his dripping umbrella and hung his hat on the stand.

“And now a half-pint,” he ordered, “for bed-time.”

“Doctor,” I cried. “If you would give me the honor?”

The doctor looked at the bottle, “Hühnberger!” He reached for it. “Now you have good taste! Excuse me, I’ve been too free. I’m Doctor Schmitz.”

“A pleasure!” I nodded. “My name is—is.” I stuttered. At the last moment I couldn’t think of the false name I had given the Innkeeper on my arrival. I thought through the imagined names in romances that a man uses on a secret tryst with a girl. Then it occurred to me with affection that I had used the name of the Justice of the Peace.

“My name is Doctor Schmeisser,” I finished.

He took a place but not without first greeting the still guest. The bartender returned and set down the two bottles I had ordered.

Mr. Urz returned this greeting as little as any of the others and sat quietly sighing, filling and emptying his glass.

We toasted and drank. The doctor had an enormous thirst. He looked sadly at all the empty bottles that stood around my chair and been emptied without him.

“I must make that right,” he laughed, and he did, thoroughly.

Again Mr. Urz let out his high shrill resounding tones.

“I have lost my monkey!”

“Please tell me doctor,” I asked. “What is with him? Did the poor fellow really have a monkey that ran away and that he still mourns?”

“He never had one,” said the Innkeeper.

“Still, he had one,” said the doctor. “But tell us Klaus, tell us. I would like to add my mustard later on.”

“It is nothing really special,” opinioned the Innkeeper. “Urz was our sexton, led the boy choir in the church and also sang in it very beautifully. He also worked the bellows of the organ and performed all the duties of the sexton for thirty years to the fullest expectations of the Parrish and the congregation.

He was a little poor with words and always shy around people. Only on Saturday evenings would he come here, sit quietly at his table and drink his half-pint.

Then quite suddenly he awoke every day with the fixed thought that he had lost his monkey. There was nothing else is his mind except this wild idea. He neglected all of his duties, it was impossible for him to serve any more as sexton. The congregation granted him a small pension. He went downhill from there. Now he goes around Weinberger all week long during the day and catches moles. He brings them here to me and I buy them. Moleskin brings a good price these days.”

“Ready!” cried the doctor and held his glass high so a new bottle wouldn’t be so long coming.

“Now dear sir, that is how the layman sees it. I, as a doctor, take the case a little differently. Look, Mr. Urz has a very high voice. It is certain that he can easily sing high ‘C’. I am not very musically talented but someone once told me about a world famous singer, Farinelli, who could sing two and a half notes over the high ‘F’.

I have been treating Urz for many months. He had pneumonia and it has cost me great effort to bring him back again on both legs. I have had the opportunity to learn a little about his psyche and believe that he, like the formerly world famous Farinelli, could sing the high ‘F’.

Now his life is ripped apart and there are no more good days for him. Mr. Urz is inconsolable because he has lost his ‘F’.”

[Translator's note: This is the point in the story where the punch line is given. It will not translate properly because it is about wordplay. It can however, still be appreciated. In the German language "Affchen" means monkey. "Aff" means ape and is also the spelling for the letter "F" and "chen" means little. Monkey is literally "little ape". Mr. Urz has been saying all along that he has lost his little "F".]

"That is very remarkable!" I began, "Do you believe that—"

"Not at all remarkable!" interrupted the Innkeeper. "It all makes sense."

"Still very remarkable!" cried the doctor and gave the Innkeeper a hearty dig in the ribs. "Curious things happen in the valley of the Mosel. Why won't people say the pure truth, Klaus? Wasn't the incident of the Schneider house-keepers remarkable as well?" [[ii]]

"Which Schneider house-keepers?" asked the Innkeeper.

But the doctor gave him a second poke in the ribs and stamped on his foot. The Innkeeper nodded and said dejectedly.

"Yes, yes, naturally. It was indeed."

He picked up a new bottle and filled the glasses.

"What about the Schneider house-keepers?" I asked.

The doctor explained. "There were two sisters, twins although old maids. They inherited the business from their mother and things were going well. They were very capable and did work for all the Ladies of the city. Everyone wanted them. Elisabeth was the first and the other was named Charlotte but people only called them Schneiderlilli and Schneiderlollo.

Now pay attention dear sir, on Three Kings Day seven years ago Lilli and Lollo lost their yards. Do you remember, Klaus?"

"Naturally I remember!" confirmed the Innkeeper.

"Four yards was all they had," continued the doctor.

“You must know that we here today measure not in meters but in yards. Both always had two yards, two for Lilli and two for Lollo and they were gone, the four yards simply gone over night! How could the Schneider business continue without their yards?”

“Yes, but,” I attempted. “Why didn’t they buy—”

“Hold on!” cried the doctor. “That is not all! Around this time a fat wine merchant, Rappapport, out of Koln was here and heard the story. He was doing a wine test right here on this table that you are sitting at now dear Sir! He said that he wanted to help both poor maidens. He could not give them four yards because he didn’t have any. But he did have four pieces of pitch that he would give them.”

I drank the rest of my wine. I was totally confused.

“What did he give them?” I asked.

“Four pieces of pitch,” replied the doctor. “The only four he had! His name was Rappapport, wasn’t it, Klaus?”

“Certainly, his name was Rappapport,” confirmed the Innkeeper.

“Now pay attention dear sir,” continued the doctor. “What gossip and laughter it gave to our entire city. Think hard about it dear sir. Lilli and Lollo had lost their yards and were running around the world naked and unclothed, the poor things. That is why the merchant wanted to give them the pitch, two for each. It was the origin of the new custom!

The pure scorn, the mockery. The poor things nearly cried their eyes out. They scarcely ventured out on the street anymore and you needed to go inside to see them. What became of them? They died somewhere over in Hessisches!”

“But dear doctor,” I attempted. “That is all certainly a joke. If the—”

“A joke?” the doctor yelled. “A joke? Drink up dear sir, that the spirit of our good wine can bestow more clarity. It is the strange fate of our city

that our jokes become tragic reality. Everyday something happens here! Pay attention Dr. Schmeisser and see if you ever find anything like it on your world travels.

You have a mighty bill this evening and with God's and our help it will become much higher.

Prosit, dear sir!

This will cost many beautiful coins won't it Klaus? And now consider what could occur if this inexorable Innkeeper cold bloodedly seizes the last, I emphasize explicitly the very last coin he can. I ask Doctor Schmeisser, what would you do without those coins?"

"Hear me out," I cried. "For all that's sacred will you hear me out? I want to confess. I am not Doctor Schmeisser! I only wrote that name in the guestbook because, because I travel incognito!"

"Cheer up, Mr. Incognito," laughed the doctor. "That is the danger and also the way of escape. Your punishment is only to buy a couple of bottles and learn the frightful fates of the Schneider house-keepers and of poor Mr. Urz." [[iii]]

He turned around and toasted the still guest. "Who was the best organ pumper in the entire city?"

"I was, I was," lamented Urz. "But now I have lost my monkey! I can make no more wind!"

"No, no," opinioned the doctor. "Sorry it doesn't go any more, it's broken."

"He whistled out his last hole," the Innkeeper joined in.

"The fate of our poor city," said the doctor and crossed himself. "But we would like to speak of more cheerful things. No more of this. Drink up dear sir, drink up!"

I don’t remember much of what happened after that. Only that later they both drug me up the stairs and put me to bed.

On the next day the bright sun shone in the Mosel valley. I heard no lament and the pretty maiden from Wiesbaden came. I forgot the strange fate that hung suspended over Traben-Trarbach and the quiet guest, Mr. Urz, with the moles dangling from his frock-coat buttons.

God, to be young. [[iv]]

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Alternate Ending: (from *Die Schönsten Hände der Welt*, 1943)

I slept, very hard and very deep. Then I dreamed that I awoke. I stood up, the early light of dawn crawled in through the windows.

“You must go to the train station” I thought, then washed up, got dressed and left the house.

But I couldn’t find the way through to the street, even forgot where I wanted to go. I ended up at the top of a hill. As I wandered in a daze through the mountain vinyards, a shadow flitted across the path. Then it came up to me: a whispy companion, who materalized out in front of me. I called out to him, and he turned half-way around—ah, it was my friend from last night! And once more on the hunt—three moles already dangled from his button holes.

“Good morning, Herr Urz!” I greeted him.

He looked at me suspiciously, as if he had never seen me before.

“What are you doing here?” he asked. “And who are you anyway?”—

“Don’t be afraid,” I said. “I don’t want to take your moles away from you. I’m only out for a morning stroll! I am an attorney and my name is—”

This time I gave my right name—it was strange, the reaction of this whispy creature. First he took a step back, as if he was afraid, then he stared hard at me for several minutes. Finally he gulped:

“Yes—it is true, you are him! I remember, oh yes, now I remember!”

He pulled himself back together; a shudder ran through his gaunt body. And, in chopped words, with a wistful solemnity, he said:

“I greet you, dear father!”

“Father?” I laughed. “I’m no spiritual Herr. I already told you that I’m an attorney—”

He nodded.

“Oh, I know, I know,” he said. “You are an attorney, a lawyer for the royal court in Saarbrücken. I am so happy, that I have found you again, dear father!”

I saw that there was no reasoning with the crazy fellow. But in any case it was in no way pleasant to be addressed as “Father” by him.

“Father there, Father here!” I began. “You, Herr Urz, and I; we are Rhinelanders and wander here upon the Rhinish countryside, don’t we? In doing so, I hope that you, even as I myself, are obiedient and compliant to the law. But since we were both born before 1900 the old civil law is no longer enforced! And for such things we both fall under the code of Napoleon. But there is stated in article 340: *‘La recherché de la paternité est interdite!’* [the seeking of paternity is forbidden!]”

I was powerfully proud of my legal knowledge—how could the fellow know, that it was the only sentence that I knew about Rhinish justice!”

“So please, no more about fatherhood,” I concluded. “The law forbids any investigation into that relationship, and we must obey it.”

That appeared to clear things up for him. He was silent for awhile, but then he said:

“Tell me, is searching for the mother forbidden as well?”

“Not at all,” I answered. “You can search for your mother as long as you want!”

A glow came over Herr Urz’s entire face:

“I don’t need to search any more—I have already found her, my mother!”

He held out a dirty hand to me:

“I greet you most cordially—dear, dear, mother!”

And before I knew it, he grabbed my right hand and pressed a sticky kiss on it.

“Father—Mother,” he cried, “it is all the same between us. You are both to me: father and mother! Are to me—both of my dear parents!”

I tore my hand away, it was really an insult for such a ragged creature to speak of a royal Prussian attorney and a Doctor as his father and mother, and especially as both parents.

“Quit with the stupid jokes,” I continued. “Go catch your moles, search for the monkey, which you have lost; but leave me alone. I have absolutely nothing, nothing at all to do with you.”

His face contorted; he trembled, so that all the moles on the button holes swung back and forth. With both hands he beat against his breast, sighed and sobbed.

“I have lost my monkey, yes, yes.!” he lamented. “And even my own father will not acknowledge me!”

He lifted his arms in the air and began dramatically:

“Oh unhappy day, when I first looked upon the world!

Oh why did my father’s body not strangle me?

Oh why did I not die, before I was born?

Oh why was my father’s body not a bier?

Oh why did I not die at birth?

Oh why didn’t the hour of death strike at the same time?

Oh why, father, tell—”

“Shut up!” I yelled at him. “Shut up, fellow!”

He collapsed together, as if his legs had been broken. He sank to his knees and wept bitterly.

I felt really bad about it.

“Ach, excuse me,” I attempted. “I meant no harm. It was only so I could escape!”

He looked up, and then slowly stood up.

“That is just it!” he sobbed. “First you want to escape—and then you want to deny it: that is the entire tragedy of my existence! I don’t demand any alimony, father, only a childish reverence moves me. Why don’t you acknowledge me, dear mother?”

I didn’t understand any of the crazy stuff.

“But that is all nonsense!” I cried. “I scarcely know you, Herr Urz, and don’t really understand you at all!”

Them he became dramatic again:

“Nonsense?” he blustered.

“Oh you raven father! You crow mother! You jackdaw parent!”

And then immediately, in a maudlin preacher’s tone, he continued:

“You don’t know me, don’t understand me? Believe me Herr Father: you now see as if through a dark mirror—but then you will see face to face. Now you recognize part of it, but then you will recognize all of it just as I have!”

He straightened up.

“First Book of Corinthians, chapter thirteen, verse twelve!” he inserted proudly.

“I am familiar with it,” I said. “But you will see, if you read further in that same chapter: even if you ‘speak with the tongues of angels’, that it is of no use! I don’t have—any love for you, at least not in a parental way.”

He took a couple of steps away from the path, pushed against a melon stand with his hand.

“Excuse me, mein Herr,” he said. “I know my position in regards to you, know how I must behave. I am a miserable outsider, am a one of a kind, but a free one of a kind, that has escaped from his narrow prison. It is true, I have a sad past, lived as a poor sexton in repressed circumstances. But now I patrol through the vinyards as a free man. Live well. You will never see me again father.”

He bowed deeply, and then disolved into the October fog.

“Air head!” I hissed after him. “Cowardly shirker!”

Then it seemed as if the creature entirely transformed itself. The thin figure faded away and the face became a blurred grin, that became a wasted laughter.

“You fool,” it rang. “You childish, silly fool! Don’t you know that I am a symbol?”

Then it seemed to me as if he was no longer there, as if the creature disappeared into itself, as if from out of the surrounding fog a repulsive, repellent breath formed itself into a ball.

“I greet you,” it screeched, “greet you, Herr Father, Herr Poet! You and those like you—great artists, great men! There you sprawl, give speeches and chat! There you think and witness and create—great miracles, immortal masterpieces! Do you know what that brings? One and one thing alone—ever and ever again—only one miserable thing, one who has lost his monkey—me, Herr Urz!”

A choking, evil stench came from out of the vinyards. I shivered, turned around, took the path to the city, and down to the Mosel.

Soon I was in the streets, and fled through the dawn. But still I heard from a distance, this voice; no longer scornful, no longer screeching and laughing.

This time it was pathetic; it rang very unctuous and pious:

“It is all vanity, says the preacher; it is all entirely vanity. I see everything that happens under the sun, and I see, that it is all vanity and misery.”

I arrived at my hotel, climbed up the stairs, and crawled back into bed.

* *

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But when I awoke, the bright October sun was shining into the Mosel valley. I was not miserable at all—and then the pretty little Fräulein came from Wiesbaden. Then I forgot the strange fate that hung over Traben-Trarbach, and the quiet guest, Herr Urz, who had moles dangling from his jacket.

God, to be young—

[i]The casual reader will believe our Dr. Schmeisser is angry because his new bride did not show up on the train. The text indicates he is angry because he went home with the old woman from the train station and couldn't go through with it because he was now married. He was mad at himself, not at anyone else! This is a touchy issue for a translator to deal with. I can't give too much information and at the same time need to give enough for the reader to get it.

[ii]

The story about the Schneider sisters is quite obscure. This is obviously a tongue-in-cheek reference to the movement from exotic dancers to Burlesque shows. This happened during Ewers life. Exotic dancers of the day would dance a provocative dance with only one or two pieces of cloth to hide their nudity. These are the "yards" that are referred to. I will leave it to the reader's imagination why the sisters were called house-keepers.

[iii] These obvious vulgar puns at the end of the story are at the expense of poor Mr. Urz. "best organ pumper in the entire city" and the "breaking wind" puns are so obscure they might be missed by the casual reader. They also show the good humor that the story is written in.

[iv]

I've made these footnotes because the casual reader might find this story a waste of time, especially since the main punch line will not translate into English. This is the first story in the book "Grotesken" and placed prominently to whet the reader's appetite for more. It is also meant to showcase Ewer's literary talent. To think it's bad writing means we must be missing something.